

The Political Authority of Secularism in International Relations

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Secularism is an important source of political authority in International Relations theory and practice. Secularists identify something called ‘religion’ and separate it from the domains of the state, the economy and science. This separation facilitates a consensus which is sustained by a powerful yet historically contingent set of beliefs, including secularism as the realization of God’s will, secularism as the natural evolution toward universal morality and secularism as a normal consequence of economic modernization. Despite these aspirations, secularism is unequipped to serve as a universal model of public life, either domestically or internationally. The creation of the category of religion and its demarcation from politics is a highly politicized decision that is not subject to a final settlement, and the pretense of a final settlement exacerbates international conflict rather than diminishing it. The religion/politics negotiation is a fluid site of authority with complex relations to the state system, the global economy, international ethics and other more heavily theorized locations of power in international relations.

KEY WORDS ♦ church and state ♦ clash of civilizations ♦ fundamentalism ♦ international conflict ♦ religious conflict ♦ religion ♦ secularism ♦ secularization

Introduction

Secularism identifies something called ‘religion’ and separates it from the ‘secular’ domains of the state, the economy and science. The ‘secular’, then, is associated with the worldly or temporal. It carries no overt references to a transcendent order or divine being. In normative terms, secularism is characterized by its universalist pretensions and its claim of superiority over non-secular alternatives. As Juergensmeyer (1993: 27) argues, ‘secular

nationalism was thought to be not only natural but also universally applicable and morally right'. These characteristics are taken for granted in the modern social sciences and in the discipline of International Relations. Sociologist José Casanova (1994: 17) has observed that, 'the theory of secularization may be the only theory which was able to attain a truly paradigmatic status within the modern social sciences'. Secularism is the dominant language of religion and politics in the West. Knowledge about religion and its relation to politics are dominated by secularist assumptions.

Yet one might protest immediately that this argument is counter-intuitive. After all, the current President of the United States is not a secularist, is he? George W. Bush calls for secular democracy in Iraq. Yet he openly refers to Christian justifications for his foreign policy, and religion plays an important role in his strategic vision and public decision-making. In a recent speech, for example, Bush (2003) noted that 'liberty is both the plan of Heaven for humanity, and the best hope for progress here on earth'. This appears contradictory at first glance. How can Bush be simultaneously, and publicly, both secular and religious? To answer this question it is necessary to entertain the possibility that secularism comes in different varieties. These different trajectories of secularism have differing effects for International Relations theory and practice. The variety espoused by President Bush relies on what Nicholas Wolterstorff of Yale Divinity School calls a 'theistic account of political authority'. As Wolterstorff (2003) argues, 'among the ways in which a theistic account of political authority is distinct from all others 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'. The United States, for Bush, is empowered to do certain things by a transcendental authority. It is a secular republic that is realizing God's will.¹ From within this world-view, one might even say that secularist US foreign policy is willed by God. Repositioned slightly in this manner, Bush's joint invocation of secular and Christian discourse begins to make sense. Bush is a Christian secularist.

This formulation may sound paradoxical. Yet it takes us some distance in describing the relationship between secularism, religion and contemporary politics. Secularism is beholden to religion in complex ways. Once it is acknowledged that this is the case, secularism appears not only in its ostensible opposition to religion but as the enactment of a particular, though certainly distinct, theological discourse in its own right. As theologian and social theorist John Milbank (1993: 3) notes, this concept of 'the critical non-avoidability of the theological and metaphysical' has appeared in the work of Alasdair MacIntyre, Gillian Rose, René Girard, Guy Lardreau and Christian Jambet. Its implications for international relations, however, remain unexplored.

This article explores these implications. Following a brief introduction to the history of secularism, I describe the two dominant varieties of Western secularism and evaluate their consequences for international relations. I conclude that secularism, of the kind espoused by Bush but also in its more explicitly anti-religious varieties, needs to be reconsidered as an organizing model of public life.² This is especially the case insofar as it is foisted upon countries outside of historical Christendom and its settler colonies. As it stands, secularism arrogates to itself the right to define the role of religion in politics. In doing so, it shuts down important debates about the moral bases of public order and incites a backlash against its hegemonic aspirations. Perhaps most significantly, secularism operates unaware of the contingency of its assumptions and the consequences of its universalizing tendencies.³ As Connolly (1999b: 4) has argued, ‘the very intensity of the struggle that [secularism] wages against religious intolerance may induce blind spots with respect to itself’. To seal its claim to moral superiority, secularism denominates ‘religion’ as the domain of the violent, the irrational, the undemocratic, the ‘other’. As Appleby (2000: 5) notes, it is ‘conventional wisdom that religious fervor — unrestrained religious commitment — inevitably expresses itself in violence and intolerance’. Secularists disassociate themselves from their own violent and antidemocratic tendencies by displacing them on to ‘religion’. Though secularism purports to stand outside the contested territory of religion and politics, it does not. Secularism is located on the spectrum of theological politics.⁴

A History of Secularism

Secularism is a political tradition that has been evolving for eight centuries. It shares important relationships with other traditions, sustaining complex ties with Judeo-Christianity,⁵ and maintaining a long-standing relationship with Islam, its primary alter ego. What is the history of the ‘secular’? How might we ‘unearth the arbitrary moments’, to use Milbank’s term, in the construction of secular reason? What is the relationship between the secularization thesis and international relations?

The notion of the ‘secular’ has taken on a range of meanings over the past eight centuries. The earliest references can be traced to the 13th century, when the notion of the *saeculum* arose in reference to a binary opposition within Christianity. Priests who withdrew from the world (*saeculum*) formed the religious clergy, while those living in the world formed the secular clergy (Casanova, 1994). The term ‘secular’ was used in English, often with negative connotations, to distinguish clergy living in the wider world from those in monastic seclusion. By the 16th century, the term gradually began to shed its affiliation with Godlessness and the profane. Keane (2000: 6)

argues that in this era ‘the word “secular” was flung into motion and used to describe a world thought to be in motion. In this second moment, to “secularise” meant to make someone or something secular — converting from ecclesiastical to civil use or possession.’ To secularize was to *take possession of* that which had been associated with the ecclesiastical. Casanova (1994: 13) describes this process as the ‘passage, transfer, or relocation of persons, things, function, meanings, and so forth, from their traditional location in the religious sphere to the secular spheres’. He argues that this meaning of secularization was dominant at the time of 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, in which it referred to the laicization of church lands. In a third transformation, and from the 19th century onward, secularism assumed the meaning recognized in the vernacular today. It was used to describe a movement that was ‘expressly intended to provide a certain theory of life and conduct without reference to a deity or a future life’ (Tamimi, 2000: 14). Secularists were those who came to believe that the ‘Church and the world are caught up in an historical struggle in which slowly, irreversibly worldliness is getting the upper hand’ (Keane, 2000: 7). By the 19th century, the *seculere* had ‘emerged historically within North American and European Christian culture as a subordinate space in which the mundane and the material could be given due attention’ (Connolly, 1995: 189).

This glimpse at the history of secularism reveals two interesting characteristics that are relevant to international relations. First, secularization once referred to the ‘taking possession’ of land and people. It entailed the ‘massive expropriation and appropriation, usually by the state, of monasteries, landholdings, and the most-main wealth of the church after the Protestant Reformation and the ensuing religious wars’ (Casanova, 1994: 13). This meaning of secularization, though now overshadowed by its association with the separation of church and state in Western democracies, remains relevant outside those democracies. Secularization has retained the connotation of ‘taking possession of’ in many non-Western contexts. In the Middle East in particular, secularism has served as a legitimizing principle for the suppression of local political authorities and practices. It has contributed to the attempt to ‘take possession’ of the Middle East in the name of a modern Western ideal.

A second important characteristic of secularism is its presumption to distinguish cleanly between matters that are transcendental and those that are temporal. In defining that which is considered to be mundane, secularists by default assign a place for that which is *not* mundane — the religious. Curiously, then, as Casanova (1994: 20) has remarked, ‘the secular, as a concept, only makes sense in relation to its counterpart, the religious’. Secularism, then, defines *itself* as the starting point in relation to which the ‘religious’ is constructed. As Asad (2003: 192) argues, ‘in the discourse of

modernity ‘the secular’ presents itself as the ground from which theological discourse was generated . . . ?

These characteristics of secularism present two distinct sets of problems. First, secularism has the potential to jeopardize democratic politics. Individuals and groups who dissent from the secular transcendental/temporal delineation are shut out of public deliberation before it begins. This explains why secularists are extremely wary of political Islam, and generally shun non-theistic and non-Kantian public philosophies. Consider an example from the religious politics of Turkey and Pakistan, both of which have witnessed the ascent of powerful non-Western and non-secular parties and platforms. From a strictly secularist perspective, both the Turkish Justice and Development Party and the Pakistani United Action Front are worrisome because they support a role for Islam in the public sphere and threaten Western-inspired boundaries between the sacred and secular. These parties have not been warmly received among secularists. The problem, however, is that if Western powers are perceived as standing behind the repression of Islamist parties regardless of their actual policies, the potential for terrorism increases. Rather than blindly supporting secularist political solutions at any cost, then, the international community should consider supporting pluralistic democracy, even if this means support for religious parties. Rasul Bakhsh Rais, a professor at Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad, has argued that the worst thing that the Pakistani government could do is to repress the United Action Front. ‘They won’t be in a position to alter foreign policy or a domestic policy of the government, but they will be a strong voice, and that voice needs to be heard’ (Rohde, 2002).

Yet this procedural remedy alone is insufficient. As Casanova (2003: 5) has argued with reference to religious interventions in the 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’. This is to say that the secular *claim* to represent neutrality, justice and democracy is itself problematic. Secularism, by defining something called religion and expelling it from ‘politics’, defines the transcendental/temporal divide in a particular way. This is a theological move. It is also a political one. Secularism marks out the domain of the ‘secular’ and associates it with public authority, common sense, rational argument, justice, tolerance and the public interest. It reserves the ‘religious’ as that which it is *not*, associating it with a personal God and beliefs about that God (Connolly, 1999b). These secularist moves are valid attempts to manage the relationship between the mundane and the metaphysical. Yet they are not the only moves possible. Most secularists, however, refuse to acknowledge the possibility that alternative non-secular yet democratic

models of public order could function as legitimate rivals to secularism. Secularism, contrary to its own self-representation, is not always neutral and democratic. It has been implicated with the violent, the non-democratic and the unjust. This is certainly not always the case. Yet there is a tendency within secularism to associate these negative traits with 'religion' in the public sphere, with that which is *not* secular. I want to question this automatic linkage between secularism and democratic public order.

In an interdependent world in which individuals draw from different sources of morality, an indiscriminate secularism leads to three risks. There is the potential of a backlash from proponents of non-secular alternatives who are shut out of deliberations on the contours of public order. There is a risk of shutting down new approaches to the negotiation between religion and politics, in particular those drawn from non-Western perspectives. Finally, there is a risk of remaining blind to the limitations of secularism itself. Secularism can no longer remain innocent of its status as one approach to religion and politics among others. The creation of the category of 'religion' and its demarcation from 'politics' is a highly politicized decision that has yet to be fully accounted for in Western social theory and practice. The discipline of International Relations is no exception.

Secularization and International Relations

Secularism has led to vibrant debates in sociology.⁶ Political theorists have been debating the public/private distinction for decades (see most recently Eberle, 2002). Yet these debates have only tentatively begun to enter International Relations. When Christine Sylvester (1994: 9) wrote that International Relations 'smacks of debates within the hierarchy of one church', she may have been right in more ways than one. For the most part, it is a secular church. International Relations is anchored in modern social theory, which has taken the terms of the Western delineation of 'religion' and its separation from 'politics' as the natural starting point for social science. During the Cold War, the bipolar world-view was so influential that challenges posed by questions of the sacred and the secular were overshadowed by geopolitics. Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a sense of resolution provided by having two positions from which to choose — either religion is irrelevant, or it is a source of irreconcilable conflict between communities.⁷ Neither of these alternatives offers a satisfactory account of the political authority of secularism in International Relations. To develop such an account, it is necessary to begin with the emergence of the state system itself.

As Daniel Philpott (2000) has argued, the Protestant Reformation contributed significantly to the development of the norm of state sover-

eignty that was inaugurated at Westphalia. The norm of sovereignty challenged the temporal powers of the church and decreased the public role of religion (Krasner, 1993). The Westphalian settlement cemented a modern concept 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 (Calhoun, 1997), the new republicanism de-legitimized pre-existing hierarchic forms of order. It also reinforced a distinction between what was understood as natural order as opposed to supernatural order. This new moral order, however, was still conceived within a broader Christian framework. It was characterized by a strong idea of providence and a pervasive sense that men were enacting a master plan that was providentially pre-ordained.⁸ Secularization, in other words, remained situated within a broader Christian context.

As it developed, the Westphalian system continued to reinforce a particular concept and practice of Christian secularism. The idea of a secular state system evolved out of and was conceived in opposition to the practices of three specific religious groups — Lutherans, Calvinists and Catholics. As noted earlier, in the Westphalian era the term ‘to secularize’ referred specifically to the laicization of church lands. Secular political authority, then, was imagined and enacted within an unquestioned Christian framework. As political theorist Joshua Mitchell has argued, ‘it is also the case that 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’.⁹ Thus a specific *concept* of secularism was inaugurated at Westphalia and contributed to the normative basis for the contemporary state system. This concept was linked to a powerful set of Western civilizational ideals. Secularism thus took on a prescriptive meaning, rather than simply a descriptive one. As Casanova (2003: 9) argues, ‘what makes the European situation so unique and exceptional when compared with the rest of the world is precisely the triumph of secularism as a teleological theory of religious development’.

This powerful secular consensus has been sustained through two strategies of secularization in Western democracies — laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism. The following pages describe these two varieties of secularism, which correspond to what Charles Taylor (1998) has identified as the ‘independent political ethic’ and the ‘common ground’ strategies of secularism. Laicism, like Taylor’s ‘independent political ethic’, is an attempt to expel religion from politics. Religion is dismissed as a distraction from other more important determinants of global order. Judeo-Christian secularism, like Taylor’s ‘common ground’, ties the potential for secularization to racial identity, cultural background and geographic location. Religion is the

marker of fixed differences between civilizations. Both varieties of secularism regulate the place of religion in politics by assigning it a fixed and final location in (or out of) public life. Both adopt a set of rules concerning the relationship between religion and politics that allegedly hold regardless of circumstances. Both have had significant implications for international politics.

Laicism and International Relations

Laicism, or the belief in the need to privatize religion, cuts to the core of modern political thought. Casanova (1994: 215) has argued that this privatization 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’. According to Taylor (1998: 35), the overarching objective of the ‘independent political ethic’ variety of secularism is to identify features of the human condition that allow the deduction of exceptionless norms about peace and political obedience. 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’. Religious belief and practice are conceived as ‘confined to a space where they cannot threaten political stability or the liberties of “free-thinking” citizens’ (Asad, 2003: 191). Religious studies scholar Richard King (1999: 11) summarizes the laicist position:

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.

The origins of laicism may be traced in part to Immanuel Kant. One of the principal objectives of Kant’s moral philosophy was to overcome the adversarial effects of sectarianism. To do so, he proposed elevating universal philosophy, or ‘rational religion’, to the position previously reserved for Christian theology (Kant, 1979; Connolly, 1999b). This ‘rational religion’, according to Connolly, might be thought of as a generic form of Christianity, and is elevated above sectarian faith. It is anchored in a metaphysic of the supersensible that, according to Kant, is presupposed by *any* agent of morality (Connolly, 1999b). Kant, as Connolly demonstrates, thus retained the command model of morality from Augustinian Christianity while shifting the proximate point of command from the Christian God to the moral subject. By shifting the point of command to the individual moral subject, however, Kant makes authoritative moral philosophy and rational

religion only as secure as the source of morality upon which they draw — individual recognition (Connolly, 1999b: 31). Kant’s rational religion, though it claims to displace ecclesiology entirely, actually shares several qualities with it:

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. (Connolly, 1999b: 32)

Secularism, then, ‘consists of a series of attempts to secure these four effects without open recourse to the Kantian metaphysic of the supersensible’ (Connolly, 1999b: 33).

Laicists aggressively pursue this ‘Kantian effect’ of an authoritative public morality based in singular conceptions of reason. This attachment to reason fuels their hostility toward the intrusion of theology into public life. It explains the lack of receptivity among laicists to non-theistic and non-Kantian philosophies, as well as philosophies of public order derived from Islamic tradition. Secularism in its *laic* form works to contain ecclesiastical intrusions into public life (Connolly, 1999b). It attempts to provide ‘an authoritative and self-sufficient public space equipped to regulate and limit “religious” disputes in public life’ (Connolly, 1999b: 5). To achieve this separation from religion, laicists constantly, sometimes frantically, re-inscribe the boundary between the public and the private, between the sacred and the secular, between the mundane and the metaphysical. This complex and contested process has found its way into contemporary International Relations in at least three different variations.

First, in most Marxist, realist and rationalist approaches religion is seen as a disguise for more fundamental structural, material or psychological interests. The relation between religion and politics is considered secondary to class considerations, state interest or cost/benefit analysis. Philosopher Eugenio Trias (1998: 97) summarizes the materialist understanding of religion:

Religion has been understood as ideology and false consciousness, the narcotic displacement activity of a soulless world, a form of vicarious happiness, of *bonheur*, within a socioeconomic framework that generates dissatisfaction and unhappiness and whose meaning and truth are sought and found in the class struggle and property relations.

This dismissal of religion characterizes many mainstream approaches to international politics. Historical materialist (Gills, 1987; Rosenberg, 1994)

and realist (Waltz, 1954; Morgenthau, 1993) approaches focus on either class or structural power and place very little emphasis on the politics of religion. Expected utility or game theorists (Bueno de Mesquita, 1981; Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman, 1992) base their conclusions on the assumption of rational behavior, neglecting the cultural and historical contexts within which decision-making occurs. Even social constructivists (Wendt, 1999) have been accused of failing to acknowledge ‘the rich social reality of states systems by illuminating the cultural context from which they emerge and in which they flourish’ by focusing on a mechanistic ‘interactive actors’ conception of state identity (Pasic, 1996: 97). This criticism extends to the English school of International Relations, in which according to Thomas (2001: 926), ‘questions about war and religion, and the formation of practices and religious traditions in international relations, are unfortunately ignored’.

In a second form of laicism in International Relations, religion is portrayed as not only irrelevant to international politics but antithetical to rationality and progress. Ashis Nandy (1990: 140) describes this position:

The new nation-states tend to look at religion and ethnicity the way the 19th-century colonial powers looked at distant cultures which came under their domination — at best as ‘things’ to be studied, ‘engineered’, ghettoed, museumized or preserved in reservations; at worst as inferior cultures opposed to the principles of modern living and inconsistent with the game of modern politics, science and development, and therefore deservedly facing extinction.

Here religion is regulated to the dustbin to ensure the preservation of Western civilization with its proper demarcation of the public and private, the sacred and the secular. As Esposito (2000: 9) describes this position, ‘the mixing of religion and politics is regarded as necessarily abnormal (departing from the norm), irrational, dangerous and extremist’. The separation of church and state, on the other hand, is celebrated for its contribution to modernity. The privatization of religion, as Falk (1988: 381) explains,

... 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.

This mindset is reflected in the work of economists, modernization theorists and policy-makers. It reached its height in the 1950s and 1960s among those who believed 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' (Nandy, 1990: 129). It is a perspective that remains influential in the theory and practice of international economic development.

The influence of laicism can be detected in a third approach to religion in International Relations which claims that religion is becoming anachronistic due to the globalization of some form of universal morality (Fukuyama, 1989; Held, 1995; Nussbaum, 1996). This perspective differs from the modernization theorists described earlier because rather than replacing religious faith with the scientific management of society, it substitutes a (Kantian) faith that a single moral law can and will become more effective over time. Here the spheres of control are divided between the realm of the Judeo-Christian sacred, and the realm of secular universal morality and international law. Religion, it is argued, has little or no place in the latter as the dictates of universal morality take on global stature. A consensus between the Christian sacred and secular reason defines the terms through which the 'sacred' and the 'secular' are imagined (Connolly, 1995).

The problem with these three attempts to expel religion from politics is that as Taylor (1998: 38) argues, each demands 'not only the sharing of the (independent political) ethic but also of its foundation — in this case, one supposedly independent of religion'. Laicists set the terms for the delineation of what constitutes 'religion'. They do so by defining that which is *not* religious — the secular. To put it differently, laicists compose the 'ground' from which the 'religious' is generated. In doing so they implicitly set the limits of public space. By defining the temporal, they delineate the transcendental. As a result they control the *terms* through which 'religious' disputes are publicly defined and regulated. As Taylor (1998) points out, this leads to conflict between secularists, who police the boundary of this common public sphere, and others who view this policing as an extension of religion in the name of a rival metaphysical belief. He explains the problem created by this disagreement:

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 people's beliefs over others. This problem is compounded when society diversifies to contain substantial numbers of adherents 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. (Taylor, 1998: 36–7)

Laicism has indeed been hard to swallow for many Muslims. This particular 'post-Christian' political settlement was not indigenous to the Middle East. It was a political imposition that was part of a broader attempt to 'modernize' the region. Although many aspects of modernization theory have been successfully challenged, its laicist elements remain largely intact.

In most quarters, it is quietly assumed that a separation of religion and politics is a prerequisite for successful democratization.

This may not be the case. On the contrary, the presumption that laicism is equipped to regulate religion and politics across time, space and circumstance is responsible for some of the more egregious compromises of democratic politics of the past several decades.¹⁰ Certainly the attempt to expel religion from politics has become onerous for non-secularists both inside and outside the West, and as a result the idea that religion can be expelled from politics has been called into question. Connolly (1999b: 4–5) detects a ‘strain of dogmatism’ in secularism and calls for a ‘more vibrant public pluralism’ which rejects the secular tendency to endorse a ‘single, authoritative basis of public reason and/or public ethics’. Esposito (2000: 9) describes the strong anti-religious and anti-clerical stance of secular fundamentalists associated with authoritarian regimes in the Middle East as ‘insidious’. Peter Berger (2000), once a staunch supporter of the secularization thesis, now maintains that the central premise of that thesis — that modernization necessarily leads to a decline of religion — is incorrect.

These doubts carry important implications for International Relations. It may be the case that laicism, as Taylor (1998: 37) concludes, does not travel well outside its heartland — ‘defined and pursued out of the context of Western unbelief, it understandably comes across as the imposition of one metaphysical view over others, and an alien one at that’. Claims of secular neutrality and universality mask the contested process through which the ‘secular’ itself has come into existence. Secularists do not overtly reason theologically from claims about God. Yet in presuming to *define* the contours of the secular (and by default the religious) they do make a theological move. ‘Part of the problem to be sketched and investigated therefore’, David Scott (1992: 333) has argued, ‘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. The point is that the determining conditions and effects of what gets categorized as “religion” are historically and culturally variable.’ In failing to acknowledge this variability, laicists risk antagonizing a range of potential participants in public order.¹¹

Judeo-Christian Secularism and International Relations

Assuming that laicism has been bedeviled by difficulties in recent decades, does Judeo-Christian secularism offer a viable alternative? It certainly avoids many of the pitfalls of laicism by acknowledging a place for religion in politics. In this variety of secularism, which corresponds to Taylor’s ‘common ground strategy’, 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. Historically, this represented a successful compromise between warring sects because ‘political injunctions that flowed from this common core trumped the demands of a particular confessional allegiance’ (Taylor, 1998: 33).¹² This may sound Kantian. Where this variety of secularism diverges from the laicism that Kant inspired, however, is in its *open* embrace of the pivotal role of Judeo-Christian tradition in the establishment of Western secularism.

Consider Samuel Huntington’s argument in *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996; see also Lewis, 1990). In acknowledging the relevance of religion and metaphysics to politics, Huntington made an important contribution to the discipline of International Relations at a time when such concerns had been marginalized. Modern democracy, Huntington (2001) and other Judeo-Christian secularists argue, is deeply rooted in Protestant Christianity. Western Protestant secularism provides the cultural and political ground in which liberal democracy can take root. Unlike laicist and other ‘post-metaphysical’ perspectives, then, Judeo-Christian secularists do *not* disavow their reliance upon a particular set of metaphysical views in establishing their political positions. On the contrary, this perspective resembles what American politics scholar Ted Jelen (2000: 90) has described as religious accommodationism, which 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’. The implication is that if religion is a source of political cohesion, then individual citizens who share a national religious heritage and enter into democratic deliberation can be expected to produce ‘something approaching a moral or ethical consensus’ (Jelen, 2000: 90). This ‘common ground’ serves as the basis of Judeo-Christian secularism. For Judeo-Christian secularists like Huntington and Bernard Lewis, secularism is a unique Western achievement rooted in a shared civilizational heritage.

Judeo-Christian secularism exercises a tenacious hold over the Western political imagination. Its origins may be traced to early modern Europe, where until the 15th or 16th century church and state in Europe were essentially unified, ‘each representing a different aspect of the same divine authority’ (Gedicks, 1991: 116). As Gedicks (1991: 116) notes:

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.

The Reformation 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 embodied in the church and the state. However, they made this split much 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' (Gedicks, 1991: 117–18). Gedicks maintains that this larger Christian context within which *both* church and state were set during the Reformation was so powerful that it conditioned American public discourse 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. (Gedicks, 1991: 120)

With the influx of religiously diverse immigrants to the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it became politically expedient to couch political programs in non-sectarian terms in order to ensure success at the polls (Gedicks, 1991). While Protestant discourse at that point took a back seat to a general 'civic religion', a *de facto* Protestant establishment still set the ground rules. As Gedicks (1991: 122) notes, 'Protestantism still affected public business, but implicitly, more as the source and background of political movements than as the movements themselves.'

The Protestant establishment was powerful. It resulted in legislative prayer, state acknowledgment of Easter, Christmas, Thanksgiving and the Christian Sabbath, as well as the outlawing of blasphemy and punishment of atheism (Gedicks, 1991). It formed the basis of a common culture, a 'common ground' shared by all (or most) members. 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 that was accepted by all Protestants did not amount to a general establishment, but constituted an essential foundation of civilization' (Gedicks, 1991: 123, note 30). So Protestant culture was linked to the *possibility* of civilization in early America, as Alexis de Tocqueville (1969: 292) famously acknowledged in *Democracy in America*:

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

This Protestant ‘common ground’, though slightly eroded by the increasing religious diversification of the American population and eventually modified to incorporate both Catholic (McGreevy, 2003) and, after World War II, Jewish influences, has retained its cultural foothold in contemporary secularist discourse. As Stephen L. Carter (1993: 86) has observed, ‘the image of America as a Christian nation is more firmly ingrained in both our politics and our practices than the adjustment of a few words will ever cure’. Consider as an example the outcry over the June 2002 decision about the ‘under God’ clause in the American Pledge of Allegiance that came down from a three-member panel of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. The dispute revolved around a plaintiff who argued that the ‘under God’ clause violated his rights as a parent to control the religious education of his daughter and amounted to state sponsorship of monotheism. President Eisenhower had added the clause in 1954 as a result of lobbying by the Knights of Columbus with the stated objective of reinforcing America’s faith in the face of ‘atheistic and materialistic communism’. The Ninth Circuit ruled that the Pledge should no longer be recited in American public schools because it violates the First Amendment’s prohibition against a state endorsement of religion.¹³

Protest against the ruling was fast and furious. In a 2002 radio interview on the show *Talk of the Nation*, Senator Robert Smith of New Hampshire expressed his desire to retain the ‘under God’ clause for religious reasons:

We are a nation under God, and that’s a fact, you know, and that’s the way we were founded . . . When you say the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, and you say ‘one nation under God’, if you don’t believe it’s a nation under God, you’ve got a right to believe it. That doesn’t change the fact that it is a nation under God. (*Talk of the Nation*, 2002)

Others argued on the same radio show that the ‘under God’ clause should be retained for civic reasons. For instance Douglas Brinkley, Director of the Eisenhower Center for American Studies at the University of New Orleans, argued that ‘to scratch it [the reference to God] now and change it to a word like “sun” or something else, I think, would start a kind of . . . would start attacking so many different sort of civic rituals that it’s hard to form a country’ (*Talk of the Nation*, 2002).

These objections to the Court’s ruling attest to the hold of the Judeo-Christian ‘common ground’ in American political thought and national identity. Huntington, though a scholar of International Relations, is firmly ensconced in this tradition. Far from novel, his theory of international politics conjures up a long tradition of demonizing those who do not share

a particular 'common ground'. Historian Anthony Pagden (1995) writes that in the 14th-century, jurist Bartolus de Sassoferato described a series of global divisions that are strikingly similar to those proposed by Huntington. 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. As Pagden (1995: 28) concludes:

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.

Bartolus's scheme is similar to Huntington's seven or eight 'major civilizations' — Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and 'possibly African'. Both Bartolus' and Huntington's views were affirmed not long ago by former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, chairman of the convention on the future of the European Union. After meeting with Pope John Paul II, Giscard d'Estaing stated that he was considering inserting 'an assertion of Christian values' into his draft constitution for the European Union. He also warned that Turkey's admission into the Union would amount to 'the end' of the European Union (*The Economist*, 2002).

The point is that according to Bartolus de Sassoferato, the Pope, Giscard d'Estaing, Huntington, George W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, Bernard Lewis and their numerous sympathizers, political order in the West is based in a common set of values with their roots in Western Christianity, which is the single most important defining feature of Western civilization. As Jelen (2000: 11) 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.¹⁴

Secularism, then, is perceived as one of the core values of Western civilization, sharing this distinction with a few contenders such as 'democracy' and 'liberalism'. Secularism thus helps to constitute the 'common ground' upon which Western democratic order comfortably rests. For Judeo-Christian secularists, this common ground is also a religious one. The influence of this perspective explains why, as Stephen L. Carter (1993: 99) has observed, 'there has been no era in American history when our

politicians — and, in particular, our presidents — failed to include routine references to God, and even to particular denominations, in their public rhetoric'. Or, to use Huntington's language, the West displays 'the unique dualism between God and Caesar, church and state, spiritual and temporal authority, a dualism that is essential for democracy to flourish' (Keane, 2000: 8).

The problem for International Relations is that this Judeo-Christian secular ground ends abruptly at the edge of Western civilization, however defined. This is where the troubles begin. For Judeo-Christian secularists, modern secularism and pluralistic democracy are unique to the West. Religion, the foundation of the common ground, is inextricably bound up with culture, biological heritage and/or race, and is uniquely responsible for differentiating between civilizations. As Huntington (1996: 63) argues, 'in the modern world, religion is a central, perhaps *the* central, force that motivates and mobilizes people'. Religion is the glue that holds civilizations together. Religion and culture are dictated not by 'political ideology or economic interest', but by 'faith and family, blood and belief'. Huntington takes this definition of religion, defines a Judeo-Christian common ground, and then asserts the likelihood of conflict with other 'common grounds'.

From this point on, the fault lines between the West and the non-West realize themselves effortlessly. For once it is acknowledged that secularism is a unique Western achievement, it follows that those who are *not* secular are not Western, and those who are *not* Western cannot be secular. Lines between these civilizations are 'real' and differences are 'basic'. There is solidarity in civilizational consciousness, and religious diversity is dangerous. As Huntington (1996: 318) argues, 'multiculturalism at home threatens the West; universalism abroad threatens the World. Both deny the uniqueness of Western culture'. 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' (Huntington, 1993: 62).

Huntington's argument is a general ontological defense of the primacy of the West and its claim to embody a particular racial (Western European) and religious (Christian secular) identity. It has been challenged from a range of perspectives that I will mention only briefly. Some have defended the primacy of the state over civilizations (Ajami, 1996). Others take issue with Huntington's portrayal of civilizations as unified and unitary and oppose his attempts to fortify boundaries between them (Binyan, 1996). Some challenge his essentialist ontology (Jackson, 1999). Others question the ethical implications of his arguments (Connolly, 1999a; Shapiro, 1999).

My analysis of the political authority of secularism suggests that Huntington's claim that secularism is a unique historical achievement that is exclusive to the 'West' is deeply problematic for at least three reasons. First, approaching secularism as a unique Western achievement delegitimizes non-Western perspectives that advocate a distinction between the temporal and the transcendental. If the secular distinction is *uniquely* Western, then those who support it will be seen as attempting to imitate the West rather than remaining 'true' to their own cultural traditions. Second, non-Westerners who reject any distinction between the temporal and the transcendental are assumed to be following their 'natural' cultural inclinations. This reinforces the views of those who advocate extremist positions in the negotiation of the sacred, the secular and the political. It also delegitimizes their more democratic rivals. Third, the assumption that secularism is a unique Western achievement is historically inaccurate. Many, if not most, non-Western cultures have complex political traditions that distinguish in differing ways between the sacred and the secular. As Juergensmeyer (1993: 17) has observed, 'most other religious traditions have as complicated pattern of church/state relations as Christianity has'.

A secular common ground, derived from and dependent upon an exclusive version of the religious heritage of the West, is ill equipped to meet the demands of public order in contemporary societies whether in the West or outside of it. As Taylor (1998: 33) 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'. John Keane (2000: 14) has expressed similar discomfort with Judeo-Christian secularism:

The principle of secularism, which 'represents a realisation of crucial motifs of Christianity itself' (Bonhoeffer), 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 decide for non-Christian others what they can think or say — or even whether they are capable of thinking and saying anything at all.

Judeo-Christian secularists, then, rely upon a 'common ground' that is slipping away beneath their feet. What will replace it? How might scholars of International Relations equip themselves to recognize and to realize modified ideals of public life that do not fall prey to the limitations of either laicist or Judeo-Christian secularism? Are the options limited to either an embrace of secular reason or recourse to religious faith? To engage these questions productively may require a new perspective on the sacred, the secular and the political.

Rethinking Secular Social Reality

To rethink the secular and the sacred is a tall order. One place to begin, however, is to recognize the particularity of secularism itself. This means approaching laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism as two among many possible resolutions of the question of religion and public order. Bonnie Honig's *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics* (1993) is helpful in this effort.

Honig analyzes two conflicting impulses in political life — the desire to decide crucial undecidabilities, and the will to contest established institutions and identities. Most political theorists tend toward the former, she argues, gravitating toward established ideas and institutions and avoiding the disruptions of politics. Rather than focus on dissent and disagreement, they confine politics to the 'juridical, administrative or regulative tasks of stabilizing moral and political subjects, building consensus, maintaining agreements, or consolidating communities and identities' (Honig, 1993: 2). Honig is critical of this tendency. In the attempt to free themselves from the burdens of political contest, she claims, these theorists end up silencing politics itself. Rather than theorizing politics, they *displace* it. Instead, Honig explores a contrasting tendency in the work of Nietzsche, Arendt and Derrida. In their view, politics is not only about the management and regulation of subjects and the consolidation of communities. Rather, it is a 'disruptive practice that resists the consolidations and closures of administrative and juridical settlement for the sake of the perpetuity of political contest' (Honig, 1993: 2).

Like their counterparts in political theory, scholars of International Relations also yearn for closure and consensus, at least regarding the relation between religion and politics. As Michael Barnett (1998: 250) 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'. For most political scientists, this is a secular reality. Most, either unwittingly or intentionally, have adopted one of the two trajectories of secularism described above as their 'legitimate vision of the world'. As Barnett emphasizes, these secular 'visions of the world' do not merely reflect social reality. They help to construct it. They are rarely, if ever, questioned. Secularism facilitates agreement and consensus around the notion of the separation of church and state. This consensus is sustained by a powerful constellation of beliefs — secularism as the realization of Judeo-Christian morality, secularism as the natural evolution toward universal morality and secularism as the natural result of economic modernization, to name a few. This consensus contributes to the consolidation of national identities as liberal, secular and democratic.

Take Honig's argument one step further, and one becomes skeptical of secularist attempts to stabilize moral and political subjects, build consensus, maintain agreements, and consolidate communities and identities. As I have argued, laicists who insist that religion has no place in global politics fail to consider the insistences inherent in their position, which assumes that a fixed and final separation between religion and politics is both ethically superior and politically viable. This assumption makes it difficult for them to see the place of their *own* conception of religion and the ways in which it conditions their approach to politics. It also shuts religious perspectives out of the debate, creating the potential for a bitter backlash. The more militant aspects of laicism are now being called into question. As sociologist David Martin (2003) recently commented, 'Do not think that religion and politics are separate things — they are always closely connected.' Or, as Mohandas Gandhi famously observed, 'those who thought that religion and politics could be kept separate, understood neither religion nor politics' (Nandy, 1990: 129).

Yet, though hotly debated in political theory, protests against the attempt to dispense with religion have fallen mostly on deaf ears in International Relations. There has been little effort to challenge the hegemony of laicism. As a result, forms of intolerance built into this consensus position go unrecognized. This is a dangerous position for secularists in a diverse global setting. By denying secularism's role in the *production* of the subjects that it presupposes, secularists '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' (Honig, 1993: 6). Laicism, then, contributes to the production of religious subjects, and then claims its distance from them. These subjects become the repository for secularist anxieties involving the relationship between politics, violence and metaphysics (see Euben, 1999).

Judeo-Christian secularism, which insists upon a link between fixed religious identities and the boundaries of different world civilizations, poses a different set of problems. The presumption that Western secular order, with its Judeo-Christian roots proudly exposed, is uniquely suited to a given geographical region and a particular set of peoples is a powerful established set of ideas. It reinforces contemporary religious divisions. It also encourages their adoption as the basis for exclusive forms of political community, resulting in what Connolly (1999a: 4) has described as 'civilizational wars of aggressive defense of Western uniqueness'. In the final analysis, both laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism share a great deal in common. They are both attempts to decide what Honig describes as 'crucial undecidabilities'. They both identify a fixed and final place for religion in politics. They both shut

potential dissenters from the debate over the transcendental/temporal delineation out of public deliberation before it is allowed to begin. They are both deeply indebted to a world-view that has remained largely unchallenged in Western social and political theory and practice.¹⁵

Nonetheless, one might protest, perhaps they *should* remain unchallenged. They have, after all, resulted in relatively enabling political settlements in many contexts. The secularization paradigm, a model of public religious accommodation which itself grew out of Christianity, did a reasonable job addressing the problem of sectarian conflict in Europe. It continues to serve as a useful model of public life and place of decision-making in many contexts. Yet the consensus surrounding secular public order is not shared universally. Secularism takes on a less benign demeanor from the perspective of those denominated as 'religious'. Those who disagree with the secularist delineation of the temporal/transcendental divide often view secularism with contempt. Those who feel that their territory, politics and culture have been 'taken' using secularist justifications reject secularism outright. Those who sense that they are shut out of public debate and discussion at the outset are uneasy with the secular settlement. Secularism disparages non-Western approaches to the negotiation of religion and politics. It views religion in public life, and in particular Islam, with disdain. It legitimates the repression of non-Western negotiations of the relationship between religion and politics. Perhaps most significantly, it is replete with insistences concerning its own neutrality. It insists upon its own indiscriminate identification with the democratic, the free and the rational. Through these insistences, secularism engenders what Honig describes as resistances and remainders. These remainders disrupt 'established assumptions about rationality, morality and the good' within the secular itself (Honig, 1993: 10). Secularism then seeks to silence these remainders by displacing them once again on to the category of the 'religious'.

These secularist tendencies are particularly dangerous in the context of contemporary international relations. By pushing dissenters out of the legitimate domain of the 'political' and on to the domain of the 'religious', secularism incites violent counter-reactions. As both the 'religious' and the internal remainders of secularism are shut out of politics, as they come to sense that the political domain itself is in fact *defined* by secularists, some resort to extreme tactics to air their grievances. Such zealotry is not in all circumstances attributable solely to extreme religious belief. It can also come about as a reaction to overzealous attempts to universalize a particular model of secular modernity. As Nandy (1998: 335) has observed, '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.'

Conclusion

Political scientists have been too quick to accept the two prevailing positions on religion in international politics — religion as an irrational obstacle to the pursuit of progressive politics, or religion as a unique and immutable civilizational ‘glue’ contributing to animosity between civilizations. When these two secularist narratives intermingle, as they often do, they represent an explosive combination. By arrogating to themselves the right to define the place of religion in politics and then insisting upon their neutrality in the face of ‘religious’ opposition, secularists close contributors out of public debate about the moral basis of public order, incite a backlash to their hegemonic aspirations, and blind themselves to their own presuppositions. As Honig (1993: 10) argues, ‘plurality and difference (and magnanimity toward them) are the first casualties of the displacement of politics and the closure of political space’. Secularism, in both its laicist and Judeo-Christian varieties, exhibits a tendency to close political space. It occasionally acts as a faith intolerant of other faiths (Nandy, 1990: 134). The creation of the category of religion and its demarcation from politics is a highly politicized decision that needs to be fully accounted for in international relations. The religion/politics negotiation is a fluid site of authority with complex relations to the global economy, the state system and other more heavily theorized locations of power. As Milbank (1993) has famously observed, the mythic and the religious cannot simply be left behind.

In making this argument I do not want to imply, however, that secularism should be reversed or that a common religion be reinstated in public space. Instead, secular conceptions of democratic politics must be broadened to acknowledge the positive contributions of non-secular and non-Western approaches to religion and public life. In developing his concept of a ‘non-Western’ definition of secularism, Nandy (1990: 129) has argued for such a reformulation of the secular — ‘While public life may or may not be kept free of religion, it must have space for a continuous dialogue among religious traditions and between the religious and the secular.’ This reformulated secularism would transcend the seesaw between the strong separatism and backlash of laicism, and the dangerous provincialism and potential supremacism of Judeo-Christian secularism. It would encourage the development of modified ideals of public life that would open up Western social theory to a dialogue with religious and other non-secular orientations. It would incorporate perspectives that advocate a non-hegemonic place for religion in politics, whether Judeo-Christian or not. Finally, it would allow secularists to confront the mixed legacy of secularization both in the West and outside of it. If the difficult legacy of secularization abroad is ignored, and the religious ‘others’ that it vilifies are

excluded from public debate, they ‘may return to haunt and destabilize the very closures that deny their existence’ (Honig, 1993: 15). Some may argue that it is already too late, that they already have.

Notes

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1. This trajectory of secularism evokes a long history of combining liberalism and evangelical moralism in Anglo-American political thought. For example, van der Veer (in van der Veer and Lehmann, 1999) 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’.
2. On the failings of the secularization thesis see Berger (1999) and Stark (1999).
3. Milbank (1993: 1) notes that secularism positions the ‘theological’ in a very particular way — ‘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’.
4. I am grateful to Bonnie Honig for suggesting this phrase.
5. Milbank (1993: 1) argues 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’. He concludes that only Christian theology offers a viable alternative to both secular reason and ‘nihilism’. This differs from my conclusion, which proposes a re-fashioning of the secular/theological divide to negotiate among diverse conceptions of ethics, metaphysics and politics. For competing approaches see Blumenberg (1986) and van Leeuwen (1964).
6. On the debate in the sociological literature, see Yamane (1997), Bruce (2001), Weber (1993), Taylor (2002), Hamilton (1995), Martin (1978). Hammond (1985), Wilson (1982), Chaves (1994), Tschannen (1991), and the special issue of *Sociology of Religion* 60(3) (1999).
7. For exceptions see Rubin (1990), Philpott (2000), Appleby (2000), Fox (2001), Thomas (2001), the special issue on religion and IR of *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* (2000).
8. I am grateful to Charles Taylor for his observations on the Westphalian settlement. For a description of the theological contributions to the legitimacy

of private property, absolute sovereignty and active rights — key components of the Westphalian settlement — see Milbank (1993).

9. These comments were made in February 2003 at the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and the Pew Christian Scholars Program Conference on 'Theology, Morality, and Public Life' at the University of Chicago Divinity School (25–27 February 2003).
10. An interesting case in point is militant secularism in Turkish politics, and specifically the 'soft coup' of 1997 in which Prime Minister Erbakan of the Islamist RP party was forced to resign by the military with the backing of the Turkish secularist establishment. In 2001 the European Court of Human Rights affirmed the decision to close down RP on the grounds that the party represented a threat to Turkish democracy.
11. I refer here to the *potential* for secular exclusivity based on its ontological claims concerning the contours and content of the 'sacred' and the 'secular'. Not all secularist theory and practice is subject to this critique because it does not always make such final and exclusive claims.
12. The objective here was explicitly not to make religion less relevant to public life, but rather to prevent the state from backing one confession over another. According to Taylor this even-handedness between religious traditions was the basis of the original American separation of church and state.
13. *Newdow v. US Congress*; 2002 US App. LEXIS 12826 (9th Cir., 27 June 2002), stay granted. The case was appealed to the US Supreme Court and a decision is expected in 2004.
14. For background on this subject see Berger (1967) and Neuhaus (1984).
15. To suggest that secularism has gone 'largely unchallenged' may be to slightly overstate my case. It is important to acknowledge the existence of alternative approaches to the secular/theological debate, for instance many Christian perspectives, which dissent sharply from secularism.

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