2. The Secular

Introduction

In the first chapter, I briefly reviewed some current thought about religious conflict, primarily to question the appropriateness of the term. I found that to speak of "religious conflict" as such is misleading – there are few, if any, purely religious conflicts – but that religion certainly plays a part in a number of current conflicts. That is, parties to a conflict may call on a particular reading of a religion to justify certain positions, to escalate or de-escalate a conflict, or to motivate a group in ways beyond the power of purely political concerns. This use is not solely instrumental, nor do those who invoke religion necessarily act without true belief in the sacredness of their cause. In particular other issues may spark a conflict, if religion becomes a factor it can dramatically affect the way in which parties perceive the conflict. As such, although one can not call any conflict purely religious, it is vital to seriously consider the role of religion in a conflict if one is to try to resolve it.

However, in considering the role of religion in conflict, one can not understand it in isolation. Very often, theorists and commentators view "religious conflict" as a separate category, a problem unto itself, which one can separate from traditional concerns in peacemaking. The analysis summarized above challenges any such view, but even broadening one's scope to consider religion as one factor among many is not enough. One must also consider the role that any potential peacemaker, as well as peace studies as a field, plays regarding conflicts with a religious element. In particular, one must address the secular orientation of many of the aforementioned theorists and commentators. Moreover, even religiously-minded authors in peace studies and conflict resolution are often part of secular establishments, or at least address largely secular audiences. Thus, their views on religion, its role in conflict, and the best response to such conflict are heavily influenced by their relation to the secular world. This point

may seem obvious, but scholars rarely address it, which is precisely why I choose to do so.

In this thesis, I will develop a typology by which one can analyze different secular understandings of religion and show how they influence peacemaking practices where religion is perceived to be an element of a conflict. First, though, this chapter will investigate the need for such a typology in more detail and define the meaning of "secular" as it applies to this study. It will also specify some aspects of secularity and secular-sacred interaction that I will not analyze. I intend this analysis to speak to both secular and religious readers – primarily to the former, so that they may better understand the role of their own beliefs in peacemaking, but also the latter. Examining the many meanings of "secular" for both of these groups and the need for a better understanding thereof is thus the first section of this chapter.

Problematizing the Secular

Introducing the role of secularity into the "religion and conflict" subdiscipline of peace studies, insofar as one can be identified in the works mentioned in the last chapter, does not negate the value of those analyses. Comprehending "the religious element of conflict" is important, as it allows one to take into account the effect that specifically religious beliefs may have on individuals and groups. Moreover, it does this without requiring that one treat a class of conflicts as religious. If to this one adds an understanding of the potential of strong-open religion, as drawn from R. Scott Appleby and Marc Gopin, one can also envision the developments one would wish to see in a religious tradition. However, it is not enough to leave the analysis there, treating religion as an additional factor one must take into account in peacemaking, akin to the "culture critique" that has emerged in the past decade in conflict resolution theory. As Mohammed Abu-Nimer points out in "Conflict Resolution, Culture, and Religion," there is a substantive difference between culture and religion. In trying to adapt an intercultural sensitivity model to training for religious peacebuilding, Abu-Nimer found

that there was an upper limit to how much even very open-minded people were willing to integrate the religious beliefs of others. Crossing cultural boundaries, on the other hand, was comparatively easy. The reasons people gave for this focused on the unique nature of religion as concerning fundamental truths as opposed to more outward forms.[1] People's beliefs about the sacred matter, and they matter in a different way than do cultural beliefs or practices. We can admit this even while bracketing the divine, as in the first chapter – what is important is that people *perceive* certain things to be sacred.

Even with this understanding, however, one element is missing – what about people who, rather than disputing whether a given phenomenon is sacred, are skeptical about the existence of sacredness as such? In short, what about secular people? Surely their conception of the nature of religion and the sacred will influence how they perceive the role of religion in a conflict. Even a cursory survey of the various theories purporting to describe that role mentioned in the previous chapter shows this. For some of those who see religion as primarily a source of violence, Andreas Hasenclever and Volker Rittberger's primordialists, that belief may very well be rooted in antipathy toward religion itself. What Hasenclever and Rittberger call instrumentalism, the view that religion itself is irrelevant and only appears in conflict as a tool to other ends, is often based on a worldview that marginalizes the public role of religion. Finally, although many of those who promote the role of religion as a source of peace are themselves religious, not all are – and for secular people to hold Hasenclever and Rittberger's constructivist views that envision a wider scope for religious involvement, they must believe differently from other, less amenable, seculars.[2] And yet these views are not analyzed in the literature. At most, proponents of the two former views presume that all "rational" people will understand religion in the same way that they do. Those of the

1   Abu-Nimer, Mohammed, 2001, "Conflict Resolution, Culture, and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Interreligious Peacebuilding," *Journal of Peace Research* 38(6): 685–704, p. 701.
2   Primordialism, instrumentalism, and constructivism are from: Hasenclever, Andreas, and Rittberger, Volker, 2000, "Does Religion Make a Difference? Theoretical Approaches to the Impact of Faith on Political Conflict," *Millennium* 29(3): 641-674.

latter view often find that nonreligious academics and policymakers overlook religion because of inattention, perhaps based on poor grounding in religious studies – not because, as competent actors, some have chosen to favor other factors. Either way, nuance and subtlety are lacking.

Of the authors mentioned in the first chapter who valued religion, only Gopin also directly addressed secularity, if not by that name. He noted that, for governmental actors, the chief concern is national or bureaucratic interest and that this explains far more about policy creation than knowledge or lack thereof about religion.[3] Peacemaking professionals, on the other hand, frequently hold unstated assumptions about the role of rationality and rational dialog as the keys to conflict resolution. Such assumptions cause them to overlook the possible contributions of religion.[4] While this provides a good initial critical appraisal of the role of secular thought in peacemaking, the balance of that book goes on to treat, as per the subtitle, "the future of *world religions* [italics mine], violence, and peacemaking," not secularity per se. Notably, though, in his introduction to this discussion, Gopin makes a point of saying that he "value[s] any effort that saves lives in the short or long term, no matter what its cultural assumptions may be."[5] Undoubtedly, most, if not all, peacemakers would echo this sentiment. Thus, I shall put front-and-center what is most important in any discussion about peacemaking – peacemaking itself, and its corollary in violent conflict, the saving of lives. Having this general goal in mind before proceeding to treat a subset of peacemaking, here the role of secular thought, provides an important perspective. Rather than starting with analytical detail, one should first establish a goal that establishes which details are important.

To best promote peacemaking, rather than discuss "the role of religion in conflict," I propose that it is better to seek to understand the variety of responses peacemakers may

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3 Gopin, Marc, 2000, *Between Eden and Armageddon* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press), p. 39.
4 Ibid., pp. 40-50.
5 Ibid., p. 39.

have to the role of religion in conflict. This allows us to assess the roles that both religious as well as more skeptical – although not necessarily antithetical – secular views may play in peacemaking. The literature identified in the first chapter, and the strong-open theory that springs from a synthesis of it, addressed the former views. This thesis will address the latter. As such, it has two primary audiences. First, I address it to secular peacemakers, whether academics or policymakers, so that they may better understand the complexity of secularity and the influence of various modes of secular thought on peacemaking. Building on such self-understanding I intend to outline the most positive role *secularity* can play in conflicts with a religious element. This thesis is secondarily addressed to religious people who work in academia or policy formation, careers that in the West tend to be rather secular. Many of the authors mentioned in the first chapter are themselves religious, yet must necessarily respond to the prevalence of secularity in the academy and government. For religious thinkers, this thesis may encourage literacy, in Phil Lewis's sense from the first chapter, of specifically secular modes of peacemaking in religious conflicts. However, this thesis is consciously phrased with self-identified seculars as the primary audience. This, then, brings us to the question, what is "the secular?"

Secularity

Etymology and a Short History of "the Secular"

"Secular" is primarily an adjective. It comes from the Christian Latin *sæcularis*, meaning "of the present world" or, more precisely, "of the present age."[6] The medieval Catholic Church divided clerics into categories; religious – those in monasteries whose concerns were solely spiritual – and secular – those who interacted with the world at large. There was relatively little difference between them. Being secular (or in the rarer substantive use, "a secular") did not mean a cleric was nonspiritual. Rather, it denoted an orientation of engagement with the present world within the larger Church worldview

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6 *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (1st 1933), Simpson, J.A., and Weiner, E.S.C., co-eds., in. al. (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1989), v. 14, pp. 848-849.

that gave primacy to the spiritual and the next world.

Beginning with the Renaissance and gaining strength with the Enlightenment, the definition and use of "secular" changed. It took on more shades of its current meaning and became in many ways something opposed to religion. This was in part caused by, and in part cause of, its use as a rallying point for those who opposed religious influence in thought and politics. Having identified religion with intellectual and social control, especially control based on spiritual or otherworldly knowledge that were beyond contestation, many philosophers turned to its antithesis – the here-and-now of the secular – as the basis for their thought. In particular, the rise of the secular was closely linked to the rise of rationalist science, given that much of the present world is accessible by empirical, physical investigation, whereas the next one is not. By the middle of the nineteenth century, such thought had advanced enough that the atheist G.J. Holyoake introduced the word "secularism" to the English language to refer to a definitely professed set of beliefs.[7] The historical development of secular thought is of vital importance to understanding how it appears today, and so I will treat this subject in depth in chapter four.

Historical complexity is not the only problem that arises when considering the development of "the secular" – its modern uses are also contestable. At times, "secular" can quite clearly mean nonreligious, or even antireligious – a compliment or a pejorative depending on whether and how it is employed by secular and religious actors. However, it can also mean something akin to "modern," as pertaining to things that have developed alongside religion but have not replaced it. This leads to what is perhaps the most common sense of "secular," that it is contextual – that religion is something that takes place within a wider context best described in neutral, secular terms. However, these last definitions overlook the fact that there are modern and even postmodern theologies. That is, there are properly religious modes of understanding that accord,

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7   Ibid., p. 849.

although not in all respects, to the best of contemporary thought. For instance, Jean Bethke Elshtain describes the modern theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer as being one of "sic et non" – "yes and no" – to various aspects of nonreligious modern thought.[8] It would thus be unfair to judge such works against a standard defined by secular thought. Moreover, it would be unfair to secular thought. Treating secular thought as a standard imposes an excess burden on religious thinkers to first justify their work in secular terms before treating their own issues, and deprives secular thinkers of the intellectual challenge of establishing the outlines of their beliefs in comparison to others'.

Much as I proposed analyzing not the role of religion in conflict but the role of beliefs more generally, I believe that the key is not to treat secularity – or, for that matter, religion – as definitive. That is, one must not treat one as a standard against which one judges the other. Rather, they are both modes of belief. In the first chapter, I defined religion, the sacred, and the holy or divine differently, in that religious communities formed around phenomena they deemed sacred – which, by their own action, they consecrated – that in turn connoted that which was transcendently divine. To use a semiotic metaphor, religion is a signifier and the sacred a signified that together constitute a human sign indicating a divine referent. In the last chapter, I bracketed the "divine," and continue to do so – whether or not the referent exists is another discussion altogether. However, one can still treat the sacred in sociological terms as the object of a social signifier, in as much as it involves human agency in recognition and designation. Religion here thus denotes a mode by which people relate to the world, or aspects thereof, with an otherworldly or transcendent understanding.

"Secular," in this context, indicates a counterpoint to religion that in some way or another gives primacy to this world rather than an other. "Secular," however, is still an

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8 Elshtain, Jean Bethke, 2001, "Bonhoeffer on Modernity: *Sic et Non*," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 29 (3) 345-366. "Sic et non" itself refers to the title of a theological study by Peter Abelard that was itself rather "modernist" in that it encouraged constant questioning as both a method for improving the minds of theologians as well as untangling the human error that produced contradictory interpretations of the Bible.

adjective, and thus "the secular" only means "secular things." This is too vague an understanding of the term to support the sort of analysis I intend to present. What people generally mean when they talk about the secular, as opposed to religion, is not just secular things, but an orientation, a way of both seeing the world and behaving in it. Thus, in the same way that "religion" is often used to signify religious belief as such, I will make a great deal of use of the term "secularity" to refer to the generally secular orientation of a great deal of the West today. "Secular" retains its descriptive sense in referring to this orientation. I will also occasionally use "secular" as a singular or "seculars" as a plural noun, to denote not this-worldly clerics but people of a largely secular mindset.[9] While my eschewal of an understanding of "secular" as denoting a standard against which to judge religion prohibits that use of the word in this thesis, I do recognize that in certain contexts, notably in governance, "secular" only indicates a policy of neutrality toward religion. While this concept will feature in this thesis, I recommend against using the term "secular" in this way to avoid confusion.

This understanding of secularity is value-neutral regarding religion, let alone the role of religion or belief in peacemaking. As a category it indicates a focus on this world, but it can admit any number of perspectives on religion. This includes the more opposed-to-religion mindsets to which I have alluded, the analysis of which will concern a large portion of this thesis. One could charge, however, that this definition is still too general – if this secularity can be anything from antithetical to amenable regarding religion, is it a useful description? However, it was precisely the same sort of problem that led R. Scott Appleby to call religion "ambivalent,"[10] in that equally valid interpretations of religious teachings could encourage both violent or peaceful behavior. Similarly, many people who would consider themselves secular by the general definition

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9 Amusingly, while "the secular" usually refers to things and thus I introduce "seculars" as a plural noun to refer to secular people, "the religious" commonly refers to people and so no new word is necessary. I may thus say "seculars and the religious" to refer to people, with one partial neologism and one established phrase.

10 Appleby, R. Scott, 2000, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield), pp. 29-30.

would debate specific points. It is this fact, that secularity is contested, that makes this thesis necessary. Examining the contested aspects of secularity will enable us to highlight its best aspects for peacemaking. Two pertinent contested points are the relation of secularity to the sacred, and whether there is necessarily a decline in religion where secularity flourishes. Such topics feature greatly in the debate over secularization theory in sociology, and specifically the sociology of religion, and so it is to that debate that I now turn in order to deepen our understanding of the secular.

Secularization Theory

A common understanding of secularization theory is what N.J. Demerath III calls the "all-to-nothing" approach. This approach holds that religion was once all-encompassing and that secularization is a process where religion fades away as people respond to the advancements of modernity by adopting nonreligious views and lifestyles.[11] A theorist who would agree that such thought is descended from "the Enlightenment anti-Christs"[12] is Rodney Stark. Stark characterizes secularization theory as resting on the work of thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries such as Voltaire, Thomas Jefferson, Auguste Comte, and Frederick Engels. Each of these men prophesied the death of religion, in Engels' estimate, "soon." If early-twentieth-century sociologists like Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and William James were somewhat more circumspect, Stark contends that by the 1960s secularization theory had returned to prophesying the imminent disappearance of religion.[13] Even a cursory look at the modern world, however, reveals this not to be the case.

Thus, theorists have developed a much more tenable secularization theory that Demerath calls "middle-range." Whereas all-to-nothing theory is linear and absolute, in that it posits a continuous decline of religion until it vanishes, middle-range theory is

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11 Demerath, N.J. (III), 2000, "The Varieties of Sacred Experience: Finding the Sacred in a Secular Grove," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39(1): 1-11, p. 3.
12 Ibid.
13 Stark, Rodney, 2000, "Secularization, R.I.P.," in: Swatos, William H. (Jr.), and Olson, Daniel V., eds., *The Secularization Debate* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield): 41-66, p. 41-43.

nonlinear and asymptotic. It holds that shifts between secular and religious thought are complex and that there is no reason to believe that one will eventually displace the other.[14] David Yamane calls such middle-range theory "neosecularization." Noting that what he dryly calls "apparently anomalous data" conflict with an all-to-nothing theory, Yamane holds that proponents of neosecularization can defend the core tenets of secularization theory while abandoning peripheral ones. It was these peripheral tenets that lent themselves to an all-to-nothing interpretation.[15] For Yamane, and for a number of other theorists who broadly warrant a neosecularization label, the key tenet to defend is the decline of the social salience of religion. It is worth noting an article by Mark Chaves, "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority," that is widely cited by such authors as being exemplary of such thought.[16] By this understanding, secularization is a process whereby religious organizations lose authority in the wider social system, in as much as that authority is predicated on their religious character.

Controversially, middle-range secularization theory does not necessarily require that people will become less religious, or that religious organizations will cease to provide for spiritual needs. Stark charges that "Such revisionism is ... historically inaccurate,"[17] in that it does not in fact reflect what "secularization" has traditionally meant. Steve Bruce, who himself presents a relatively strong version of middle-range secularization theory, refutes this charge. Bruce notes that even the proponents of 1960s secularization theory, such as Peter Berger, Bryan Wilson, or David Martin did not cite nineteenth-century "anti-Christs," to use Demerath's phrase, in their work.[18] Moreover, it is

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14 Demerath, "The Varieties of Sacred Experience," p. 3.

15 Yamane, David, 1997, "Secularization on Trial: In Defense of a Neosecularization Paradigm," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36(1) 109-122; quote p. 110.

16 Chaves, Mark, 1994, "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority," *Social Forces* 72(3): 749-774.

17 Stark, Rodney, "Secularization, RIP," p. 44. Stark specifically said "Such revisionism is *not only* historically inaccurate, *it is insincere*." [Italics mine.] Stark was directly referring to an article by Karel Dobbelaere in the same volume, cited elsewhere, in which Dobbelaere held that secularization theory does not address personal belief. Stark noted that Dobbelaere had recently given a presentation in which he did indeed claim that secularization theory forecasted a decline in personal religiosity in a manner akin to the all-to-nothing model. However, at most this could only indicate that Dobbelaere does not always adhere to the best of his own thinking, a charge of which many theorists are undoubtedly guilty.

18 Bruce, Steve, 1999, "Modernisation, Religious Diversity, and Rational Choice in Eastern Europe,"

entirely permissible for theorists, in adjusting a theory to better accord with the evidence, to keep the original name. That previously-held theories called "secularization" have proven faulty does not mean that all secularization theories are incorrect. Likewise, as Bruce points out, being a proponent of the theory does not mean being a proponent of the process[19] – or vice versa. Social theorists analyze many issues they may find distasteful, and although certain famous intellectuals have prophesied the death of religion that does not mean they were secularization theorists.

Bruce's secularization theory, by his own admission, goes further than the contemporary standard. He asserts that a decline in the social position of religion causes a decline in the plausibility of religious belief, and, in turn, a decline in personal expression of such belief.[20] One could compare this to Karel Dobbelaere, for instance, who notes much more obliquely that the structure of society will undoubtedly have an effect on people's belief. He does not, however, speculate as to the nature or extent of that effect.[21] However, forecasting a decline in the plausibility of certain types of belief is different from forecasting a decline in all religious belief. Bruce does not hold that secularization necessarily leads to atheism. Religion may remain, but no one religious group will have a preponderance of power in a secularized society.[22]

Thus, middle-range secularization theory focuses primarily on the observable decline in the social significance of religious authorities, and less so, if at all, on changes in the beliefs of individuals. This also has an important implication for another criticism of secularization theory. All-to-nothing theory might propose that at one time all people were highly religious, but that now such personal belief is vanishing – a statement not in accord with historical analysis.[23] However, Bruce argues, what his theory requires is

Religion, State, and Society 27(3/4): 265-275, p. 266.

19 Bruce, Steve, 2002, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West*, "Religion in the Modern World" series (Oxford, UK: Blackwell), p. 39.

20 Ibid., p. 30.

21 Dobbelaere, Karel, 2000, "Toward an Integrated Perspective of the Process Related to the Descriptive Concept of Secularization," in: Swatos, William H. (Jr.), and Olson, Daniel V., eds., *The Secularization Debate* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield): 21-39, pp. 36-37.

22 Bruce, *God is Dead*, pp. 41-43.

23 Stark, "Secularization, RIP," pp. 45-47.

only that between past and present "there be an identifiable difference in the popularity and salience of [religious] beliefs, actions, and institutions."[24] One can see this in the shift of religious organizations from the center, although not necessarily completely to the periphery, of governance, law, and education.

Although many secularization theorists continue to refer to the theory as a paradigm, they often eschew postulating a causal mechanism and hold that secularization theory is primarily descriptive. However, any true paradigm must also contain a predictive element, if only so that one may design tests to prove or disprove the theory. Traditional secularization theory did contain such a predictive element, so Stark is correct when he asserts that current theorists are being historically inaccurate by trying to make it solely descriptive. All-to-nothing theory generally holds that people's increasing scientific or rational knowledge will inevitably lead them away from belief in religion. If such secularization theorists seek to refine all-to-nothing theory, they must replace its causal aspect with a more nuanced understanding.

To aid the development of such an understanding, Demerath distinguishes between structural and functional definitions of religion. The former focus on descriptive attributes like statements of belief or modes of organization, while the latter focus on consequences, such as experiences of transcendence or the development of a moral system. Rather than use the term "religion" for both definitions, Demerath holds that "religion" is a more apt term for the former, and "sacred" for the latter.[25] This is akin to my semiotic metaphor, above – religion as a signifier largely functions to orient people toward the sacred signified, understood by its consequences. Again, the referent, the divine, is here bracketed. A focus on function and functional differentiation in modern society is, in turn, a feature of many secularization theories. For instance, Dobbelaere posits that by differentiating, aspects of modern society such as the economy or education develop their own procedures and value systems. As these develop on their

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24 Bruce, *God is Dead*, pp. 58.
25 Demerath, "The Varieties of Sacred Experience," pp. 3-4.

own terms, they reject religious control.[26] One can infer from this that a causal

mechanism of differentiation, and thus secularization, is not the increase of knowledge

leading to atheism. Rather, specialization of knowledge allows different functional

systems to operate without reference to religion, but without specifically opposing

religion either.

Understanding secularization in this way also allows one to analyze what Demerath

calls a "countervailing process of "sacralization.""[27] Given that religion does not

entirely encompass the realm of the sacred, one can look beyond religion to study how

secular and sacred play out across a range of social forms. Conrad Ostwalt has recently

developed a complex sociological theory along those lines. In particular, he studies not

only the decline in religious authority in society, but also the ways in which expression

of traditionally sacred notions have shifted to secular forms, such as the media, and how

religious organizations are also becoming more sophisticated in their use of such

forms.[28]

Secularity in This Study

Such an analysis is not necessary for the purposes of this thesis. For this study, it is

enough to postulate that for certain groups secularization, even rather rigidly

understood, is a fact – that is, that for some segments of society increasing

rationalization and specialization of knowledge has led to a marginalization, or even to

the disappearance, of religion as a social reality. In some cases this entails just a

reduction of the signifying or functional role of religion. In others, where people do not

adequately distinguish religion and sacredness, as Demerath would have them,

secularization denotes a decrease in the salience of both. One need not demonstrate that

secularization in either sense happens in all circumstances to accept that it has happened

in some. Indeed, that this has happened in some but not all cases is what causes the role

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26 Dobbelaere, Karel, 2000, "Toward an Integrated Perspective," pp. 22-23.
27 Demerath, "The Varieties of Sacred Experience," p. 3.
28 Ostwalt, Conrad, 2003, *Secular Steeples: Popular Culture and the Religious Imagination* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International).

of religion to be a contested issue in peacemaking. This is particularly the case because

secularization has tended to affect, although certainly has not been limited to,

governmental and academic elites. Such elites are often at the forefront of

peacemaking, particularly where economic or political concerns are involved. Thus, if

they perceive a conflict to be religious, the extent to which such elites are secular will

have an impact on the manner in which they propose to resolve it.

The prevalence of secularization in elites has been noted by a number of authors, as

has the effect this has on their perception of the nature of religion. Samuel Huntington

speaks of the "Davos culture" as comprising the sort of international analysts and

policymakers whom one would find at the World Economic Forum in Davos,

Switzerland.[29] Although his concern was broader than that of this thesis, in that this

"culture" gives its members a skewed view of what Huntington calls civilizations, the

concept also applies more directly to their understanding of values and religions. By

education and experience, these people share a number of assumptions about the role of

beliefs and values in thought and practice that one can broadly describe as secular.

However, as they each technically represent different nations, Davos attendees come to

believe that they represent a broad swath of world opinion rather than that of secularized

elites. This leads them to promote policies that may be out of touch with the beliefs of

wider society.

Similarly, Peter Berger, himself once a proponent of secularization theory, has

recently begun to propose the "desecularization of the world." This is not the same as

Demerath's sacralization, but, rather, a recognition that all-to-nothing secularization

theory is not particularly explanatory. In particular, Berger assesses the

Fundamentalism Project, a multivolume academic project that seeks to analyze and

explain religious fundamentalism. Berger believes the Project "was based on an upside-

down perception of the world," in which passionate religion was a rare, hard-to-explain

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29 Huntington, Samuel P., 1996, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London, UK: Touchstone), pp. 57-58.

thing. Berger countered that perhaps "the difficult-to-understand phenomenon is not Iranian mullahs but American university professors."[30] A similar mechanism operates here to that in Davos. If professors usually publish for one another and attend conferences with one another, they will probably come to believe that their point of view is more common than, in sheer numbers, it may be. Both governmental and academic cultures, then, are somewhat self-reinforcingly secularized – and, again, even if individuals have a personal faith, their interactions with their fellows will likely not be predicated on this but rather on shared secular beliefs.

I do not mean by this to assert the dissociation of secular and religious people, but rather to observe that one can differentiate them. The self-perception of the former as representing a standard or value-neutral worldview is, to an extent, rooted in misperception of the popularity of such views. Secularity, though influential, is nowhere near universal, and yet it wields great influence due to its presence in elite circles. This is not to disparage either religious or secular beliefs. Indeed, I agree with Demerath and Ostwalt that one ought to differentiate between religion and sacredness. For all the shift of authority away from religious institutions, intimations of the sacred have, if anything, diffused more greatly through wider culture. Thus, the interaction between secular and sacred is far more complex than strict secularization theory will allow, and to propose that there is an inherent division between religious and secular people misses this complexity. However, it is the presence of secularity in policy and academic circles that is at issue here. Thus, for the purposes of this thesis, I am holding secularity to be a relatively distinct set of beliefs.

However, I only mean to establish secularity as relatively distinct, not as absolutely different from religion. Drawing on Gavin Flood's presentation of George Lakoff's prototype theory, I will establish some elements of secularity as being more prototypical

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30 Berger, Peter L., 1999, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," in: Berger, ed., 1999, *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center/Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans): 1-18, p. 2 (both quotes).

than others, but that there is no key tenet that all seculars must believe. By prototype theory, "members of a category may be related to one another without all members having any properties in common."[31] Flood adds that establishing prototypicality requires judgements as to degree.[32] The survey of definitions of secularity and secularization theory, above, can help us to make such judgements. However, treating elements of category membership as prototypical rather than absolute requires acknowledging that some elements may be shared by other categories. A prime example of this is rationality. While rationalism may indeed be prototypical for secularity, this does not mean it is absent from religion. There are, certainly, highly rationalist modern theologies. Although a debate about the place of rationality in peacemaking, religious or secular, would be interesting. However, the focus of this thesis is on the role of secularity alone in peacemaking, so I will highlight those elements that particularly affect that role.

The two most salient features of secularity are the distinction between the public and private spheres and the rationalization of the public sphere. The first is a manifestation of the driving force identified by secularization theory, functional differentiation. While one could present a more complex picture and identify the way differentiation affects a wide range of social functions, as Dobbelaere did, the key distinction is between public and private. In secularity, religion is a matter of personal conviction and is thus essentially private. This is particularly rooted in the secular understanding of history that remembers the very real control religious authority once had over personal belief. Seculars thus tend to see matters of shared or public concern as being nonreligious and, specifically, they seek to exclude religion from policy formation. This process of division was a prime concern of Appleby.[33] This, then, leads to the question of what

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31 Lakoff, George, 1987, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), p. 12.
32 Flood, Gavin, 1996, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), p. 7.
33 Appleby, R. Scott, 2000, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield), particularly in the introduction, pp. 1-21.

should guide people in the public sphere if not personal beliefs. From the secular perspective, history demonstrates that it is impersonal, rational investigation that best identifies truth. Thus, as Gopin points out, seculars give reason a central place in policy formation and, of particular interest here, conflict resolution methodology treats rational dialog as the preferred method of peacemaking.

Thus, secularity as I use it in this thesis refers to a worldview held particularly but by no means exclusively in policymaking and academic circles. It holds that there is a distinction between a public, value-neutral sphere and a private one that is the domain of belief. It further holds that the former sphere is best governed by reason. Concomitantly, the social standing of religious institutions tends to decline in secular circles, at least regarding public life, and individual belief also tends to secularize. However, these effects are less common and not central to the typology. Thus, this definition of secularity is open to a fair amount of internal variation – seculars may disagree, for instance, over the precise mode of relationship between the public and the private spheres, let alone on whether personal secularization is desirable. This potential for ambivalence is what necessitates a more complex understanding of the manner in which secularity responds to religion, as noted above. Before I outline one, however, I will first identify some perspectives on secularity that I shall not address.

Other Perspectives on Secularity

A description of secularity, in popular if not in academic literature, is that secularity or elements of it are like religion. Communism, in particular, has often been criticized as being a religion, complete with pageantry, icons, and even a semi-mystical priesthood of Marxist scholars. More generally, people who feel marginalized for having faith point out that there are plenty of potential articles on faith in secular thought: faith in progress, in rationalized science, and so on. There may be some value in using this metaphor as a way to explore the nature of belief, whether secular or religious, more generally. In this way, John Smith treats humanism, Marxism, and nationalism as

"quasi-religions," noting that this is to say that they can be *like* religion, whereas "pseudo-religion" would be a pejorative.[34] However, there are also important substantive differences in what is "believed in" by seculars and the religious. In particular, religion relates to what I have identified as the divine, which secularity tends not to recognize, at least not as an organizational principle. Faith in science, however problematic, is still faith in potentially observable phenomena. Using a slightly different word choice, Larry Greil thus identifies things like Communist pageantry as "para-religions" that have the trappings of religion but no reference to the supernatural. In effect, it is religion for religion's sake – the mode of belief is aimed at preserving and strengthening the mode of belief, not at a transcendent referent.[35] This would certainly be Smith's pseudo-religion.

Likewise, I will not treat secularity as an anti-religion, even in metaphor. As Bruce points out, atheism is still a form of theistic thinking – one must be interested in theology to work out an argument against it.[36] Again, secularity here denotes the position that belief is largely a private matter and that public matters ought to be governed by reason. This is a position people can hold whether they are quasi-religious, anti-religious, or irreligious. Fundamentally, I reject defining secularity as primarily atheistic for the same reason I rejected defining religion in terms of a secular standard – because it ties the definition of one to the other. Both, rather, are modes of understanding the world. Neither is defined by the other. They each certainly have attitudes toward one another, and are unavoidably shaped by their interaction, but that is different from saying that one is necessarily defined by the other.

That in this thesis I bracket questions concerning the divine and that I shall not treat

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34 Smith, John E., 1994, *Quasi-Religions: Humanism, Marxism, and Nationalism* (New York, NY: Saint Martin's), p. 12.

35 Greil, Arthur L., 1993, "Explorations along the Sacred Frontier: Notes on Para-religions, Quasi-religions, and Other Boundary Phenomena," in: Bromley, David G., and Hadden, Jeffrey K., *Handbook of Cults and Sects in America: Assessing Two Decades of Research and Theory Development*, "Religion and the Social Order" series (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press): 153-172.

36 Bruce, *God is Dead*, pp. 41-43.

secularity as either religion or areligion go together. Whether or not there exists a divine reality, and what implications that has for people's peacemaking, is another matter. This treatment is one step removed from such theological issues, and concerns itself only with the secular reaction to the religious in the context of peacemaking. For this, it is not necessary to create "a level playing field" in which religion and secularity are equated by establishing their positions on all things, even if this were possible. Rather, establishing the social reality of the human-perceived sacred and the religious and secular responses thereto is enough.

However, in taking this analytical step back, this perspective must necessarily lack certain complexities that other approaches might examine. For instance, I have avoided treating the interaction between secular, religious, and sacred, as proposed by Demerath and Ostwalt, in favor of an understanding of religious and secular identities as relatively stable. Thus, this thesis shall not treat the process of conversion or "switching," as it is sometimes referred to in sociological literature, between belief systems. Nor shall I treat syncretic or hybridized forms of belief. This is necessary to maintain balance between the breadth and depth in this thesis – including this topic would unnecessarily lengthen it – but at the cost of treating a potentially sensitive issue in a conflict that has a major religious element. However, it is important to first refine our understanding of this topic by considering relatively stable types before introducing a new level of complexity.

On a more practical but related note, this thesis specifically treats Western secularity. While secularity is undoubtedly influential around the world, it manifests differently in different places. Not enough studies exist on those differences to warrant confidence that the definition I have here presented is adequate. For example, in the largest democracy in the world, India, the role of secularity and religion is a topic of great debate. Thus, one could apply this study to that country. However, the contemporary Indian scene is also greatly influenced by the history of colonialism. As Nandini Sundar points out, from the Indian perspective colonists exacerbated religious tensions by

importing their own and playing on internal religious differences as methods of social control. The development of Indian secularity is, at least in part, part of the Indian response to colonialism and thus one can not simply lump it together with Western notions.[37] Moreover, as Robin Archer notes, a number of assumptions on the nature of both Western and Indian history may not be as commonsense as they appear, and thus it behooves people to rethink them.[38] In particular, if Western sociologists have not yet fully agreed on secularization-desecularization-neosecularization theory, it would be unwise to apply any conclusions drawn from this debate to a different cultural context.

A related concern is globalization. While the topic will arise occasionally it is not to argue for a global perspective on secularity, but rather to establish the reasons why Western seculars might think that their views are more representative of world opinion than they are. While I contend that Huntington's Davos culture exists, many of the members thereof hail from non-Western cultures and so the previous caveat is still in effect. Thus, I will not analyze whether globalization has created a secular culture, even if only an elite one. While this may have indeed happened, much more academic work on both globalization theory and the forms secularity may take outside of the West must appear before I could pose a generalized definition of secularity on which to base this thesis.

Secularity, Peacemaking, and Strong-Open Beliefs

While I reject simply equating religion and secularity, one can gain much from applying some of the insights gained in the first chapter to the topic of secularity in peacemaking. For instance, as I have already mentioned, in the very act of defining secularity we have found that there are a number of possible meanings. This lends itself to an "ambivalence of the secular," much like Appleby's ambivalence of the sacred. If one identifies a belief system as ambivalent, then one should find within it conflicting

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37 Dr. Sundar pointed this out to me at the University of Bradford Department of Peace Studies MA day on dialog with violent actors, 21 May 2003, both as part of a pane and in conversation.
38 Archer, Robin, 2001, "Secularism and Sectarianism in India and the West: What Are the Real Lessons of American History?" *Economy and Society* 30(3): 273–287.

answers as to the best manner in which to pursue, in this case, peacemaking. Thus, one initial supposition I make is that a search for a strong-open secularity will best illuminate the way toward secular peacemaking in the same way such an analysis did for religion. For this reason, I will also often use the term literacy, both in Appleby's sense of strong self-knowledge and Lewis's of open knowledge of others, to describe the mode of secularity one ought to seek. Following from this supposition, it is likely that the weak-to-strong, closed-to-open matrix I plotted in the last chapter, by which one can identify four types of religious belief, can equally provide a useful typology to analyze secularity. I shall expand on this idea, and on typologies more generally, in the next chapter on theory and methods, but first I shall provide an initial application to secularity to demonstrate the process of this thesis. A second initial supposition is that the three academic and policy perspectives on religion presented in the first chapter – that treat it variously as a source of violence, as irrelevant, and as a source of peace – originate, at least in part, in rather divergent secular attitudes. Plotting them by the typology outlined above helps illustrate this.

As noted in the first chapter, the perspective least amenable to religion is rooted in Hasenclever and Rittberger's primordialism, which holds religious differences to be somehow innate.[39] The secular mind that adopts this sort of thinking I call secularist – it regards violence as primarily a *religious* problem, and thus the solution lies in somehow countering religion. This can connote antipathy toward religion, and so in the popular mind Karl Marx is likely the archetypal secularist. However, his famous "opium of the people" statement is often exaggerated by being taken out of context.[40] The real atheistic strand of Communism derives from Engels and Lenin. On the other hand, not

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39 Hasenclever and Rittberger, "Does Religion Make a Difference?" pp. 643-644.

40 While Marx did indeed write "religion is the *opium* of the people," he prefaced it with "religious suffering is at the same time an *expression* of real suffering and a *protest* against suffering." For Marx, religion was not cause of suffering, it was what the people used to both mask and symbolize their suffering, and needed to be removed only to reveal the actual cause of suffering, class. Marx, Karl, 1844, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in: Bottomore, T.B., ed. and trans., 1963, *Karl Marx: Early Writings* (London, UK: C.A. Watts), pp. 43-44, original italics.

all whom I describe as secularists are necessarily opposed to religion. Samuel Huntington, in his "clash of civilizations" thesis, does not explicitly oppose religion as religion – in fact, he seems rather respectful of the depth of feeling, and by extension political power, it can generate. For precisely these reasons, however, he argues that the West must be more united in its Westernness – which he often describes in rather secular terms – if it is to survive the "clash" with other civilizations.[41] By the strong-open typology, I class such perspectives as both weak and closed. They are weak in as much as they are rigid in their definition of both secularity and religion, and certainly closed for not admitting the potential for religious peacemaking.

The second position, that religion is irrelevant to peacemaking, is related to Hasenclever and Rittberger's instrumentalist perspective. Instrumentalists regard religion as at best a variable that may affect politics but which is fundamentally extraneous.[42] Rather, those whom I call liberal seculars favor secularized, rationalized political and economic solutions to what they hold to be objective problems. If Marx is the archetypal secularist, Charles Darwin represents to liberals the advancement of science in the face of religious backwardness – although it was T.H. Huxley, "Darwin's bulldog," that deserves more credit as an avid proponent of the theory of evolution. Thus, to quote Fred Halliday's argument from the first chapter, the initial step one must take in peacemaking is to separate real, material concerns "from their confused religious expression"[43] before solving them. Although this position can be strong, in that such methods as Halliday does propose are provably effective, it is still obviously closed to a fair treatment of religion for what it can bring to the many, here unspoken, nonmaterial concerns of conflict.

Finally, a postmodern perspective of secularity can contribute to the presentation of religion as a source of peace. In particular, although religious peacemakers, by

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41 See: Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 70.
42 Hasenclever and Rittberger, "Does Religion Make a Difference?" pp. 645-646.
43 Halliday, Fred, 1996, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East* (London, UK: I.B. Tauris), p. 128.

definition, present religion as such, they often make use of certain *secular* arguments to express themselves to secular audiences. The most basic of these is what Hasenclever and Rittberger called the constructivist position, which holds that religious beliefs are not fixed but fluid – as Appleby says, ambivalent – and that religious people themselves can lead fellow believers away from violence.[44] For seculars, receptivity to religion is often coupled with a certain reticence toward secular modernity and its perceived scientism or objectivism. Thus, I call this position the postmodern. While some hold Richard Wagner and his romantic, richly felt musical work to be best historical representative of this position,[45] Friedrich Nietzsche is probably the more famous example. This is certainly the case if one understands "God is dead" as a lament, not a proclamation. However, while this position is open to religion, in itself that is, as I have argued, a poor understanding of Hasenclever and Rittberger's constructivism. Without a strong self-understanding and a willingness to argue for certain values, there is a danger that mere willingness to listen can descend into weak acquiescence before adamantly stated belief.

The better understanding of the constructivist argument Hasenclever and Rittberger make is that, as they put it, it is "located somewhere between instrumentalism and primordialism."[46] Constructivism, they hold, it agrees with some elements of both but disagrees with others. Similarly, I contend that the sort of secularity that can best respond to religion is a strong-open one that borrows elements of each of the above perspectives. However, rather than seeing this as being *between* these types, I think of it as a synthesis of them. This thesis will detail that synthesis, building upon different secular perspectives to identify the best elements of each. However, I must note that each other above types of secularity – secularism, liberal, and postmodern secularity – is an ideal type, not found "in nature." They are useful analytical tools, but any given

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44 Hasenclever and Rittberger,"Does Religion Make a Difference?" pp. 665-670.
45 See: Barzun, Jacques, 1958, *Darwin, Marx, Wagner: Critique of a Heritage* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday).
46 Hasenclever and Rittberger,"Does Religion Make a Difference?" p. 648.

author or school of thought will undoubtedly express more than one perspective, depending on the context. Thus, while I will cite certain authors as being representative of a given perspective, this does not mean that I believe they are always so.

Due to this and other necessary abstractions noted above, this thesis will treat the above matters on a societal level. The more robust secularization theories refrained from making predictions as to how individuals will react to secularization – whether with a secularization of consciousness or even with a countervailing sacralization. Likewise, a strong-open analysis of either religion or secularity can not predict the behavior of each individual. What it can do is lay the groundwork for a better mode of peacemaking when religion and belief are an issue. Thus, it is up to individual peacemakers to apply insights gained herein. In particular, treating secularity as a social phenomenon will often entail an analysis of the state as a social actor, but the analysis in this thesis is not at solely state level. States are important in that they are powerful social actors, and also given the historical connection between the development of secularity and the rise of the modern state system. I will treat this last topic in the fourth, historical chapter. However, the overall emphasis of the thesis is on the role of secularity in social action generally, not on any specific level.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the approach to secularity that I will use in this thesis to explore the possibility of a strong-open secular belief. The first few sections established the definition of secularity, and also deepened the understanding of religion from the first chapter. Again, though, I do not wish to equate secularity and religion. Rather, both are ways by which people understand the world – and thus both will also influence the ways in which people will comprehend conflict. The reason I introduced secularity here rather than in the first chapter is so that I could present the common, religiocentric, understanding of religion and conflict first. Once I established that, I could more easily draw attention to the equally important role of secular thought. This chapter then

outlined three variants of secularity according to the strong-open typology presented in the first chapter. They were weak, closed secularism; strong, closed liberal secularity; and weak, open postmodern secularity. Finally, it alluded to the potential for developing a strong-open secularity.

The middle part of this thesis will begin with a longer historical treatment of secularity, and will then go into much more detail in describing each of these ideal types than is possible here. That will lay the groundwork for the final section, which will extrapolate from the middle section the nature of the strong-open secularity I seek, along with some illustrative potential examples. First, however, it is necessary to expand on a number of the analytical concepts I have introduced in the first two chapters. This includes a discussion of paradigms, the nature and scope of peace studies, and an exposition on a concept briefly mentioned here, the nature of theoretical synthesis. The next chapter focuses on these topics, and also briefly makes some methodological notes.