On the Nature of Civil and Political Religion

A Re-examination of the Civil Religion Thesis

by

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Abstract

On the Nature of Civil and Political Religion

A Re-examination and Critique of the Civil Religion Thesis

The notion of civil religion, as it appears in the literature, has been too narrowly conceived. While the roots of the concept can be traced back to the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau and Emile Durkheim (two very different traditions), sociological analyses of this topic have been guided, almost exclusively, by a Durkheimian approach. This perspective seeks to explain religion in terms of an alleged 'spontaneous' integrative role which is considered crucial to the understanding of the civil religious phenomenon. In so doing, it neglects the coercive and divisive potential of civil religion, and wrongly relegates the coercive type (whose 'theology' is dependent on the state) to third world countries. The current conceptualization of civil religion, particularly in its American usage and understanding, emphasizes the religious and cultural dimension of the concept, and fails to give due consideration to its political and ideological foundations. It is also too limited to be of use in the field of comparative studies. By neglecting to understand *civil religion* in its original Rousseauan meaning, sociological scholarship has unintentionally encouraged a misinterpretation of the civil religion concept, and attained a one-sided view of the civil religious phenomenon.

This dissertation proposes a critique of the notion of civil religion as it is conceived and employed by Robert Bellah and other American scholars. It challenges some of the most commonly-accepted assumptions of the civil religion thesis. The lack of a clear distinction between Rousseau's and Durkheim's ideas constitutes the key to this critique. It is argued that most other 'problems' and deficiencies encountered in the literature stem from this omission. Although the analysis concentrates largely on the United States, it is supported by an examination of the comparative literature.

In seeking to advance the analysis of civil religion, a model is offered which orders civil religions in a continuum in terms of their theoretical sources and political significance. The continuum ranges from civil religion as *culture* (the Durkheimian "civil" approach) to civil religion as *ideology* (the Rousseauan "political" approach). At one end of the spectrum is the classical position developed by Durkheim, which asserts that each collectivity has a 'sacred' quality and a common religion. At the other end, civil religion is conceived in terms of a particular political order, as advocated by Rousseau. The continuum is understood in the Weberian sense of two 'ideal types.' Civil religion is neither 'cultural' nor 'ideological' in any absolute sense. This means that the 'cultural' and 'ideological' aspects of civil religion can be conceptually distinguished but not separated in reality. How civil religion 'operates' in each case is an important conceptual issue, and having distinct analytic categories with which to make such comparisons is essential in terms of theoretical and empirical concerns. This broadened conception enriches the study of civil religion, by providing a better sociological tool with which to compare 'shades' and types of civil religion both *within* societies and *among* them.

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In memory of my mother,

Hortensia Gormáz Lopetegui (1912-1996)

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Introduction

In the Winter 1967 issue of *Daedalus*, Robert N. Bellah published an article entitled "Civil Religion in America," in which he claimed that there "actually exists alongside of and rather clearly differentiated from the churches an elaborate and well institutionalized civil religion in America" (1967:1). Quoting from John Kennedy's and Lyndon Johnson's inaugural addresses, Bellah argued that their speeches, and those of the founding fathers, provided a clue to understanding the relationship between religion and politics in the United States. These speeches, which almost always made references to God, revealed a profound religious spirit in American life. "What we have," Bellah noted, "is a collection of beliefs, symbols and rituals with respect to sacred things and institutionalized in a collectivity" (1967:8).

Bellah described the presence of a "religion" or a "religious dimension" in the United States which was independent from religious and political institutions, and, at the same time, not in competition with either the church or the state. While this religion included many Christian elements, it was "neither sectarian nor in any specific sense Christian" (1967:8). An important aspect of the American political tradition, he observed, is the belief that Americans, "individually and collectively," have an obligation to "carry out God's will on earth" (1967:5). Bellah concluded that since the early days of the Republic, Americans have interpreted their history in strictly religious terms. In fact, in his view, civil religion had served (and still serves) "as a genuine vehicle of national religious self-understanding" (1967:8). From Bellah's perspective, civil religion provided

a "transcendent goal for the political process" and contributed to the unity and collective identity of Americans as a national community (1967:4).

Bellah's article galvanized many in the scholarly community and resulted in scores of subsequent articles about his thesis. It is not an exaggeration to say that it was this publication that initiated the debate over civil religion in the U.S. Others before him had spoken of the "religion of the Republic," "the religion of the American Way of Life," even of "American Shinto," but there was no common basis from which discussions and analysis could proceed. It was the phrase *civil religion in America* "that took on a life of its own, that [was] picked up by *The New York Times* and by the popular news weeklies, that has inspired books, essays and symposia" (Bellah, 1974b:255). Bellah's interpretation of a 'national faith,' or of a religious dimension of American life, generated concerns about the actual meaning and definition of the term, its applicability as a sociological concept, and whether it could be considered a religion or not. After the publication of his article, the sociological landscape (particularly the sociology of religion) became divided in two camps: those who wholeheartedly accepted Bellah's thesis, and those who simply dismissed the notion of civil religion. The latter not only questioned Bellah's analysis, but doubted the existence of a civil religion in America (Bellah, 1974b:255).

In spite of the voluminous literature on civil religion and decades of debate, there is still no consensus on its definition. This is hardly surprising, since scholars disagree even about the meaning of religion itself. The term 'civil religion' not only covers a wide range of phenomena, as we will see in Chapter Two, but the idea of civil religion also appears under a variety of different names, such as public religion, public philosophy, public theology, political religion, republican religion, civic faith, and so on.

This thesis makes no claims to resolving the definitional problem. Neither does it enter into discussion of whether civil religion is a 'true' religion or not. Those interested in these issues are referred to discussions in the work of Cutler (1968), Coleman (1970), Cherry (1971), Neuhaus (1986) and West (1980). I understand civil religion in the same terms that John Wilson does. Civil religion as a concept, Wilson notes, "concerns the possibility that specific social and cultural beliefs, behaviors, and institutions" constitute a "religion" (or something like a religion) which is concerned with civil and political order in the society (1986:111). Civil religion tends to sacralize certain aspects of civil and political life by means of public rituals, civic liturgies and collective ceremonies. In so doing, beliefs and behaviours acquire a 'religious' dimension. One may say, thus, that civil religion represents the religious expression of a particular collectivity. Like secular ideologies of different kinds, it attempts to reinforce group identity and to legitimize an existing social and political order, but it does so by injecting a transcendental dimension or by providing a religious gloss on the justification.

Before explaining the structure of the thesis, I should indicate that this dissertation grew out of my general interest in the problem of religion and politics in the modern world. In "Civil Religion in Comparative Perspective," an article on civil religion in Chile during the Pinochet regime, co-authored with Dr. Lorne Dawson, we studied some of the theoretical developments and disputes engendered by the civil religion thesis. While working on this project, it became clear that the concept, as used by American sociologists, was often not useful for the study of civil religion in other countries, nor for the study of certain types of civil religion in democratic societies, including the United States. The notion of civil religion turned out to be specially difficult to apply in cases where the state sought to make it a political tool to further national policies, programs, etc.

Moreover, many of the claims on which the notion of civil religion rests (currently accepted as a matter of 'faith'), did not always hold true. Again, this was particularly evident in authoritarian societies, but to a lesser extent in democracies as well.

Indeed, if one accepts Bellah's theoretical position, it becomes extremely difficult to discern or analyze variations among societies with regard to the way they tie political life to the sacred (Markoff and Regan, 1982:334). Frank Reynold's work on Thailand is a case in point. His research led him to conclude that there was a significant difference, in "certain important respects," between the Thai situation and Bellah's theoretical position. As a result, he chose to "dispense" with the notion of "civil religion" and opted to identify the Thai's religious expression as "civic" rather than "civil" to distinguish it from the American phenomenon (1977:281). I believe that problems such as the one encountered by Reynolds could be resolved by conceptualizing civil religion as a phenomenon which manifests itself in two forms: as 'culture' (the Durkheimian "civil" approach) and as 'ideology' (the Rousseauan "political" approach). These forms are not opposites. Rather they are part of a continuum. This means that they are distinguishable conceptually but cannot be separated in reality. Civil religion thus conceptualized, may be seen either as a phenomenon expressing an inward conviction on the part of members of a certain group (implicit culture), or as a political resource--a form of external compulsion or force used to support an existing political order. In the former case, civil religion is assumed to be a "cultural given" or an emergent property of social life itself (Demerath and Williams, 1985). In the latter, it is a premeditated political ideology, constructed by the state and its political leaders, which members of a collectivity are expected/forced to accept.

This dissertation elaborates further the preliminary discussion on this topic carried out by Dr. Dawson and myself. It is a theoretical and empirical study of the notion of civil religion. To a large extent, it constitutes a critique of civil religion, particularly as interpreted by American scholars. It challenges some of the most common claims concerning the civil religion thesis. Although the analysis concentrates largely on the United States, it is supported by an examination of the comparative literature.

A review of the literature indicates that the notion, as used by Bellah and others, rests on some broadly-accepted assumptions, stemming from the Durkheimian tradition. These will be discussed shortly. For the moment suffice it to say that in an era when consensus interpretations have been disproved by many scholars, students of civil religion, in general, have continued to use the structuralist-consensus tradition of analysis delineated by Durkheim. This perspective seeks to explain religion in terms of an alleged integrative role. Hence, the integrative function of civil religion is considered crucial to understanding the civil religious experience in the United States and elsewhere.

Indeed, the central focus of Bellah's thesis is that there is a set of national symbols and rituals in America that transcend and effectively neutralize differences in beliefs and values of American citizens, irrespective of their religions, ethnic backgrounds, or social positions. If the notion of civil religion were to be applied solely to the study of the United States, where civil religion falls more in the Durkheimian camp, a structural functionalist approach to the issue would still pose some serious problems, and some questions would remain unanswered. But the problem becomes even more acute when one wants to apply the concept to other societies.

It should be noted that when dealing with the civil religion issue, neither Bellah, nor the most representative scholars in this field (such as John Coleman or Phillip Hammond, among others), have restricted their focus to the United States. Manifestations of the civil religion phenomenon have been said to exist in almost all societies. But despite Bellah's (1980d) or Hammond's (1980a) good intentions in developing cross-cultural research (see, for example, Bellah's discussion of civil religion in Japan, and Hammond's comparison of Mexico and the United States), and despite Coleman's (1969) equally good intention to develop a more universal civil religion typology, their basic approach to other forms of civil religion has been worked out primarily in relation to the American case (Reynolds, 1977:282). The American case has been taken to be the paradigm of civil religion. But, as suggested above, the concepts and theoretical logic characteristic of the Durkheimian tradition are of limited use when we try to understand how civil religion 'works.' Hammond, for example, locates civil religion in the "modern" stage of religious evolution which is characterized by a differentiation of religious and political institutions (Markoff and Regan, 1982:354). Modern, advanced societies, especially the United States, would exhibit a fully independent civil religion (or belief system)- -controlled neither by the church nor by the state. This position dismisses, in one sweep, the political, ideological, and sometimes coercive potential of civil religion, and wrongly relegates the coercive type (or 'political religion,' whose 'theology' is dependent on the state) to third world countries (i.e., essentially "pre-modern").

Before returning to the 'problem' of assumptions we must take a look at a closely related 'problem' of the civil religion thesis. It has to do with the lack of understanding of the Rousseauan approach, and the failure to differentiate conceptually between the two classical traditions.

Rousseau coined the term *civil religion*, so it is not surprising that almost all theoretical or empirical studies on civil religion start by mentioning his name. In his preliminary article Bellah acknowledged that the term *civil religion* "is, of course, Rousseau's," and mentioned, in passing, that The *Social Contract* outlines the dogmas of the civil religion. While not necessarily arguing "for the particular influence of Rousseau" on the founding fathers and presidents of the United States, Bellah claimed that "similar ideas" to the ones advanced by Rousseau, were part of the political and cultural climate not only of late-eighteenth century America, but of contemporary America as well. He was referring, in particular, to references to God made by public officers and political authorities, and to the "active" role God was supposed to play in American political life.

To be sure, the belief in a Divinity is the first dogma of Rousseau's civil religion, but civil religion as understood by Rousseau involves much more than vague references to God. Rousseau's intention was to create a secular religion that would not be attached to any particular religious belief or organized church. Rather, this religion should be designed and controlled by the state.

While Bellah mentions Rousseau, he has been strongly influenced by Durkheim. Most students of civil religion have opted to take Bellah's route. Hundreds of articles, books and publications make vague references to Rousseau, but, as mentioned before, there has been little or no effort to comprehend what he really meant by civil religion.[1] Most importantly, perhaps, the

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[1] Indeed, most authors seem quite content to quote him on this issue, or to start their publications with similar sentences, but then take a Durkheimian approach to the study of civil religion. Phrases such as "Rousseau first used the term civil religion" (Bourg, 1976:141), "a term first coined by Jean Jacques Rousseau" (Coleman, 1969:67), "a term first used by Rousseau" (Gehrigh, 1981a:51), "it was Rousseau who first coined the term" (Purdy, 1982:308), the term "has been part of the accepted vocabulary of social theory since Jean-Jacques Rousseau..." (West, 1980:23), the term "was first introduced by Rousseau" (Zuo, 1991:99), have become standard introductions in the literature on civil religion. As far as I know, in a truly voluminous literature, only one scholar explicitly acknowledges that "Rousseau understood civil religion in a way that was fundamentally different from Bellah's understanding" (Wilson, 1971:14). And, although a distinction between Rousseau's and Durkheim's theories is implicit in the works of Casanova (1994), Giner (1993), and Hammond (1980c), only Demerath and Williams (1985) explicitly discuss what this difference entails.

sociological literature shows a serious lack of understanding concerning the full political implications of a Rousseauan type of civil religion. On this rather simple oversight hangs a conceptual and theoretical impasse obscuring almost all contemporary analyses of civil religion (Hammond, 1980c:138).[2] Not surprisingly, many aspects of civil religion have simply been taken for granted, and still many others, inherent in the notion of civil religion, have never been made problematic in theory. In short, it is my conviction that a theoretical clarification of these two traditions is absolutely essential before any actual research is carried out, for most other 'problems' and deficiencies in the literature stem from the failure to make this distinction.

In fact, the overemphasis given to the Durkheimian conception of civil religion has left the civil religion thesis open to fundamental criticism. This brings us back to the question of the underlying, and widely-accepted assumptions on which the civil religion thesis rests. These assumptions clearly illustrate the primacy scholars have given to Durkheim's account of religion. In so doing, they have often tended to explain civil religion in terms of the 'function' it plays in integrating society. Although a critique of these assumptions (which are intimately related and to some degree overlapping) will reappear throughout the thesis, I will briefly summarize them at this point and indicate my difficulties with them.

1) Civil religion is understood, *by definition*, to be an essentially integrative force in society, the assumption being that civil religion can act as the social glue of modern society, providing a widespread moral consensus and national integration. I dispute the idea that civil religion is a set of religious symbols, beliefs, and rituals which *by definition* serves to integrate society. Civil religion

[2] Although Hammond clearly distinguishes between these two traditions, in my opinion, he mis-interprets Rousseau's theory (see Chapter Four).

may give rise, under certain conditions, to social conflict, tension, and division, and not lead to social integration. The values of civil religion and its ritual manifestations may be meaningful only to certain segments of the population, or, they may benefit certain groups, at the expense of others. Allegiance to certain types of civil religion may also conflict with social cohesion. Civil religion, in either of the two forms, is more likely to produce a 'qualified consensus' rather than full-scale social integration. The Durkheim/Bellah interpretation of civil religion, does not adequately allow for either the potentially manipulative nature of civil religion or for the potentially conflictual diversity (ideological, social, ethnic) of modern society.

2) Closely related to the above is the idea that civil religion allegedly reflects the values and beliefs of the *nation as a whole*. This implies that by definition, again, civil religion is a national religion. Indeed, the central focus of Bellah's thesis is the nation itself. It follows that the civil religion concept, as used by Bellah and others, often makes reference to *a group* as if it were a homogeneous entity representing the whole society or nation. However, civil religion need not be *per force* a national religion. Thus, another objection which I raise against Bellah's thesis, is its implicit identification of American civil religion with the religious self-definition of the American people as a whole.

3) Civil religion is assumed to provide legitimating functions to the political order. To be sure, while the legitimating capacity of civil religion may not be too significant, or even too effective, there seems to be enough evidence indicating that civil religion *is used* as an instrument of legitimation, both in democratic and undemocratic societies. Bellah assumes that a common moral and religious meaning system provides an explanation and justification for the the social order. By sacralizing the polity, civil religion explains and justifies society in terms of an ultimate

set of values. The problem is that from this idea Bellah deduces that civil religion, at least in America, represents a "higher law," the nation is subordinated to, and judged by, higher ethical principles that transcend it (Bellah, 1974b:255). Others scholars agree and claim that the nation is the "primary agent of God's meaningful activity in history" (Coleman, 1969:74). The assumption here is that civil religion not only legitimizes the social order, but, at the same time, challenges the nation and reminds its members to live up to its ideals. If we accept this proposition, civil religion can only be "upright."

In its Durkheimian variety civil religion may be what Gehrig (1981b:36) refers to as a "potentially enduring form of overarching cultural legitimation," at least for some groups in society. However, the assumption that civil religion is always a benign force favoring consensual politics, cultural integration, pluralistic ethics, all under the control of a non-sectarian God, will be called into question. Analyses of civil religion, both in the United States and in the comparative cases that will be discussed especially in Chapters Four and Five, belie such a formulation. The coercive, divisive side of civil religion, always potentially present, will be discussed at various points in the thesis. It will be argued that civil religion, as an ideological and political tool, rather than being a permanent legitimator of power and authority in the polity, is a phenomenon responding to "episodic" crises of legitimation (see Marty, 1974; Regan, 1976).

4) In order to understand how civil religion is used for legitimating or other purposes, we need to confront the issue of the *spontaneous* (Durkheim's idea) versus the *imposed* (Rousseau's idea) nature of civil religion--an issue which will be clarified in greater detail in Chapter One.

A Durkheimian type of civil religion exhibits strong cultural elements and seems to be, to some degree, more spontaneous. There is no centrally-regulated apparatus to insure compliance with

the tenets of faith. Within the Durkheimian framework, moral understandings, beliefs, and values would "make sense" to the collectivity and would be, to a large extent, 'taken-for-granted.' Civil religion would be a 'natural' expression of group life (whether it is the nation or any smaller collectivity or group). In this sense, we can refer to civil religion as a cultural phenomenon (i.e., a group's understanding of itself). One may say that as a cultural phenomenon, civil religion only gradually takes on form and becomes institutionalized. A Rousseauan type of civil religion, by contrast, is a consciously "designed" religion that leaders have to create and encourage. It is intended to exert strong control over the citizenry. Despite Rousseau's democratic intentions, this type of civil religion appears to be closely associated with particular unstable political situations, or with authoritarian and despotic governments. In other words, the nature of the state and of society are crucial factors determining the character and shape civil religion may assume as a legitimator of power and authority, in a particular society, at a particular time.

As a political phenomenon, civil religion may be used (and is used) as a conscious tool to further political purposes (e.g., to foster national integration, to restore social and political stability, and/or to legitimize a particular political order). This implies that civil religion has the potential of being an *imposed* phenomenon rather than a permanent *spontaneous* force in society. As such, civil religion is more likely to emerge at crucial turning points in a nation's history, as a rationalization for political rule. Under this condition, civil religious 'themes' would likely be more visible in periods of crises (both national or international).

5) In the United States, civil religion is assumed to be a belief system totally independent both from the church and from the state (i.e., not tied to any particular denomination or any particular ruling regime). The alleged structural differentiation of American civil religion is

challenged. It is my contention that there is not enough evidence to support this claim. In fact, I will argue that American civil religion has been closely associated with the educational, political and legal interests of the American experience.

To sum up, this dissertation represents an effort to examine critically the validity of a theoretical tradition that has maintained that civil religion: 1) *integrates* society by providing a set of common values, beliefs, rituals, ceremonies and myths, which express a sense of a common past and common destiny; 2) reflects the values and beliefs of the *nation as a whole*, and, consequently, *mobilizes* the entire nation or society's members on behalf of socially approved tasks and responsibilities; 3) *legitimizes* the social order by transmitting a sense of justness or rightness to the political goals pursued by society; 4) is a sort of *spontaneous* phenomenon arising out of the social experience itself; 5) and, in the case of the United States, is a *fully differentiated* belief system.

The structure of this thesis, organized in six chapters, follows, to a large extent, the logic of my own path of critical inquiry and reflection with regard to the notion of civil religion and its realization in different political systems. The first chapter deals with the classical roots of the civil religion concept in the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Emile Durkheim. This chapter is essentially expository. I begin my discussion by examining the critical differences between these two foundational thinkers. I will argue that despite the fact that Rousseau introduced the idea of civil religion as a necessary element of the modern liberal polity, he fashioned a blueprint for an authoritarian civil religion *"of"* and *"for"* the state, a fact that most scholars have been either unable or unwilling fully to understand.[3] However, the emergence of civil religion, as Rousseau

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[3] Outside the sociological field, there is, perhaps, no aspect of Rousseau's political theory that has been more severely criticized than his doctrine on civil religion. His ideas on "civil religion" have been judged the intellectual cradle of totalitarian democracy. Some critics have even gone as far as to consider this chapter "unfortunate" and "an

understood it, is not a phenomenon peculiar to authoritarian regimes, or to developing nations alone. It can also appear in democratic societies. This is important to keep in mind, for the Rousseauan version is fundamental for an understanding of why civil religion may be consciously used in democratic societies as a political resource. In a true Rousseauan sense, civil religion is a religion created to support the organization of the state.

The central components of Durkheim's sociology of religion are also elaborated in Chapter One. Durkheim holds that every relatively stable society possesses a set of shared beliefs, rituals, and symbols that express its most fundamental values. These values, Durkheim argues, acquire a transcendental meaning for they are considered sacred by members of the group. They serve to bring the community together. In so doing, they "naturally" provide for the order, stability, and integration of the society as a whole. Through periodic collective rites, ceremonies, and festivities, values are reaffirmed, maintained and sustained. Durkheim sees civil religion as essentially a *spontaneous* social phenomenon, whose *natural* 'function' is to provide loyalty and integration to a group or community.

After setting out the central ideas of Durkheim and Rousseau, I examine American civil religion as conceived by Bellah and his followers. Chapter Two gives a general overview of civil religion in the context of American society (where the Durkheimian tradition has reigned supreme and where the bulk of the literature is concentrated), and addresses the main issues and controversies of the American discussion. I examine how American scholars have set the tone

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embarrassment" (Noone, 1980:133, 152). It is essentially this chapter which is responsible for the charges leveled at Rousseau, depicting him as "the apostle of tyranny and an enemy to liberty in the state" (Cobban, 1934:56. In Noone, 1980:133), blaming him "for heralding modern despotism" (Merquior, 1979:36), or accusing him of being the "spiritual father of totalitarianism" (Macfarlane, 1970:12) and "the first apologist of unfreedom" (Merquior, 1980:36). Certainly, the warning that anyone who "behaves" as if he does not believe the tenets of the civic faith is to be punished by death, "does have an ominous ring in the light of the tyrannies of our time" (Sherover, 1984:215).

and established the direction of the civil religion debate, and why their interpretation of civil religion (the way it has been portrayed as operating in the United States) has been unifocal, and, to a certain degree, incorrect. American scholars have tended to concentrate primarily on value consensus, to the relative neglect of conflict, exclusion, and disharmony.[4] Emphasis has been placed on the religious dimension of civil religion, not on its political implications. For example, the civil religion rhetoric of certain Presidents (e.g., the one used by Nixon during the Vietnam War), by not fitting the consensual-integrative approach, has been considered a 'pathology,' a distortion, or a 'misuse' of American civil religion (see Bellah, 1974:262; see also Chapter Five). In other words, American students of civil religion have hardly ever directed their attention to the ideological manipulative intent (or potential) of civil religion. They have not only accepted the Durkheimian proposition that a stable society is based on a commonality of shared beliefs and symbols, but have also embraced the idea that the general integrative function of civil religion is capable of transcending any particular social structure, political regime, and even historical circumstances. This chapter questions, or at least makes problematic, the cohesiveness attributed to civil religion in America and its inevitable "spontaneous" nature.

Chapter Three asks about the relationship between religion (both civil and institutional), and the processes of legitimation, power, and politics in modern society. As is suggested in Chapter Two, the Bellah tradition neither considers the possibility that the state (or its political and intellectual leaders) may shape the tone and direction of civil religion, nor does it confront the idea

[4] The equation of civil religion with social unity or social cohesion has seldom been presented as a 'problem.' As mentioned before, Bellah's publication not only sparked the debate but literally divided the American sociological field in two bands: those who accepted Bellah's thesis and those who did not. The latter, with very few exceptions, have simply not been part of the debate. This may explain the unifocality and unidirectionality one finds in the literature.

that civil religion or religious beliefs may help legitimize the domination of some groups over others.[5] In other words, the idea that the state may *use* civil religion politically, has received no notice in the traditional theories and models of civil religion. This is attributed, again, to the classic "consensual" tradition adopted by Bellah and others. The question of social order, legitimation and integration is thus approached in terms of consensus, and seldom in terms of the dynamics of tension, conflict, and power. Chapter Three provides an analysis and discussion of the relationship between civil religion and state ideology and power. In so doing, this chapter also calls into question the idea that there is a highly differentiated civil religion in America.

In line with my understanding that civil religion can be conceived as a political resource at the service of the state, Chapter Four deals summarily with some cases of state-directed civil religions in comparative perspective, in different societies, and at different times. It is here that I advance the idea, which will be developed in more detail in a subsequent chapter, that civil religion should be understood both as *culture* and as *ideology*.

This chapter shows how civil religion can exist as a consciously-manipulated and state-controlled political phenomenon. To a certain extent, it represents a synopsis or preparation for what is to come in Chapter Five and the Conclusion. Although highly differentiated, advanced societies are less likely to develop a totalitarian political religion, I argue that the democratic or anti-democratic potential of civil religions is grounded in the political processes and the uses of civil religion by particular groups at particular times, and not in the stages of religious evolution as some

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[5] I owe this idea to Giddens (1978:103) who, in criticizing the Durkheimian tradition in the sociology of religion, argues that it "nowhere confronts the possibility that religious beliefs are ideologies, which help legitimate the domination of some groups over others."

scholars have argued.[6] This suggests that there is no such a thing as a simple linear evolution of civil religion, with the most advanced societies having the most advanced levels of civil religion (a structurally differentiated symbol system). The way civil religion operates is apparently related to the type of politics and the type of government under consideration, not to the stages of societal evolution.

Chapter Five offers a case study as an illustration of state-directed civil religions in a non-democratic political system. It also illustrates grounds for addressing the utility of seeing civil religion as a "political" religion, without totally abandoning the civil religion discussion. Following Bellah's idea that elements of civil religion are elaborated especially in times of national crises, the civil religion which emerged in Chile during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, from 1973-1989, is examined. It is argued that civil religion emerged in Chile as a political response to the most serious crisis in the nation's history: a military coup d'etat, and a previously unknown and profound social, political, and ideological polarization. The new regime of General Pinochet had to legitimize the coup, reorganize the political structure to ensure military control, and develop an ideology to gain the support of different civilian and religious groups. A civil religion was invoked to help the military junta in this task.

Chapter Six deals with the linkage between nationalism and civil religion. Although civil religion needs not be *per force* a national religion (we may find regional, ethnic, or local civic varieties), it tends, nonetheless, to be both national and nationalist. The question is: How does civil religion distinguish itself from narrow nationalism, or from the religious nature of cultural

[6] Several other authors have claimed that the differentiation of American civil religion from the religious and political domain (state) follows the general direction of cultural evolution (see, for example, Bellah, 1980a; Coleman, 1969).

nationalism? Is civil religion (particularly of the Durkheimian variety) no more than national self-glorification? Despite repeated claims that American civil religion is not the idolization of the nation, or national self-glorification, it seems to me that the way civil religion has been defined by Americans (in terms of its functions), makes it very difficult to distinguish or differentiate between civil religion and nationalism. One may say that there is an 'elective affinity' between them. For, cultural nationalism performs the same role, and operates in the same way as civil religion does, even if not conventionally thought of as such. It seems to me that civil religion, particularly in its cultural dimension, is indistinguishable from cultural nationalism or from the religious aspect of nationalism discussed, for example, in the works of Hayes (1960), Hudson (1970) and others.

I finish my dissertation by "revisiting" Durkheim and Rousseau. In seeking to facilitate and advance the analysis of civil religion, in the Conclusion I propose a model which orders civil religions in terms of a continuum based on their theoretical sources and cultural or political significance.[7] What had been earlier suggested is here made quite explicit. At one end of the spectrum is the position classically developed by Durkheim. At the other end, is the position advanced by Rousseau where civil religion is conceived in instrumental terms and is linked to a particular political order.

My thesis does not imply that Durkheim's and Bellah's theories should be dismissed. Rather, it suggests that students of civil religion (in particular American scholars) have not 'done their homework' properly. By neglecting to understand *civil religion* as originally intended by

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[7] I am indebted to Wilson in his use of a model based on "a continuum of religious representations" (1979:149). In Wilson's construct the locus of analysis is the "religious referent." He seeks to identify where the sacred is located (whether sacrality is attributed to the group or to ritual elements and symbol systems, or to cultural values, etc.). Wilson's suggestion that other continua could be constructed provided the inspiration for the model I present in this thesis .

Rousseau, they have unintentionally encouraged a misinterpretation of this phenomenon. I want to make it clear that if the notion of *civil religion* is to remain a useful sociological concept, both in the context of American society, and in cross-cultural settings, we need to stop conceiving civil religion in strictly (or exclusively) Durkheimian terms-- as something that springs *spontaneously* from the culture itself, and *spontaneously* binds people together. The notion of civil religion needs to be framed at a higher level of generality. That is, as a social phenomenon that is neither just civil, nor just religious, but also essentially political. By conceptualizing civil religion this way, and by using it in its dual manifestation--as *culture* and as *ideology*, many of the problems encountered in the literature may be avoided. It may be easier to distinguish different types or shades of civil religions not only *among* societies but *within* societies as well. I stand with Michael W. Hughey, who, in re-examining the Durkheimian theory of religion, wrote: "it is with the limits of the conclusions reached, not their falsity, that the present study is concerned" (1983:xvi).

Chapter I

Theoretical Foundations

This chapter deals with the roots of the civil religion concept, and provides the theoretical framework for the remainder of the dissertation. In order to highlight the question of 'origins' of the concept, I briefly introduce the two classical theoretical traditions. Then, I offer a more detailed analysis of Rousseau's and Durkheim's most fundamental ideas on civil religion, focusing specifically on their critical differences. Finally, I compare their radically divergent conceptions of religion and social integration, paying special attention to the role assigned to the state in maintaining social order.

I.1 One European Pedigree, Two Lineages

The notion of civil religion, as Hammond (1976:169) has noted, has been of interest to many thinkers throughout the history of Western political thought for, "in a broad sense it is the question of legitimacy or of 'good citizenship.'" However, the term itself was first used by Rousseau in *The Social Contract* (1762/1973) to refer to the civic-religious dimension of the polity. Civil religion, in Rousseau's terms, refers to a civic faith to be created and imposed by the sovereign as a way of promoting civic virtues and political unity. "Now that there is and can be no longer an exclusive national religion," Rousseau writes, "tolerance should be given to all religions that tolerate others,

so long as their dogmas contain nothing contrary to the duties of citizenship" (1762/1973:277). Rousseau's purpose was to create a religion that would elicit feelings of civic membership and enforce the duties of citizenship in national communities no longer bonded by traditional religious links. This religion, Rousseau believed, was essential to foster social discipline in a modern liberal polity, and to bind all individuals to the state. Rousseau makes a clear distinction between civil religion and supernatural or denominational religions. I will come to this point later.

Durkheim's classic study, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912/1961a), is also an essential part of the civil religion literature. In this work Durkheim deals specifically with primitive religion, but draws conclusions pertaining to modern industrialized society as well. Durkheim, who never used the term civil religion, conceptualizes the totemic practices of the Arunta as a spontaneous religious phenomenon arising from the very depths of the social experience itself. As Hammond has noted (1980:138), in Durkheim's view, "the very existence of society implies a common ('civil') religion." Conversely, any religion is something eminently social, for beliefs in the supernatural and the sacred are essentially collective, social realities. So, even when religion seems to spring from the inner depth of the individual, the actual source "on which it feeds" is still to be found in society (Durkheim, 1912/1986a:161). As such, any religion is, in the last analysis, a social (civil) phenomenon.

Strictly speaking, as I will discuss later, while Rousseau coined the term *civil religion*, he conceived, in fact, the notion of *political religion*.[8] Rousseau advocates a state religion comprising

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[8] It has been the tendency in sociology to refer to "civil religion," while political scientists or historians tend to use the terms "political religion," "public religion," "public theology," etc. Perhaps the reason is to be found in the fact that, generally speaking, sociologists have taken the consensus approach which sees civil religion as stemming from culture in a rather spontaneous way. As such, they tend to see the locus of civil religion in civil society. Historians and political scientists, on the other hand, tend to emphasize the role of the state in the production of civil religion. (For a discussion of Fascism and Nazism as "political religions," see Gentile (1990) and Moltmann (1986). See also Apter (1963), for

a simple set of civic-religious dogmas that every citizen must subscribe to, on pain of exile or death. Civil religion in this sense is constitutive of a state or political community. Unlike Rousseau, Durkheim neither conceives civil religion as an instrumental political process to secure loyalty to a particular social order, nor is he interested in the political utility of civil religion. Durkheim's approach to civil religion implies a spontaneous, non-coercive civic faith uniting all individuals into one single moral community. In a Durkheimian sense, civil religion is truly "*civil*," in that it belongs to civil society not to the state or political authorities.[9] Rousseau and Durkheim represent two different intellectual traditions and their differences are critical for an understanding of the civil religion concept. What follows is a more detailed analysis of their theoretical positions.

I.2 Rousseau on Civil Religion

Rousseau's notion of civil religion emerges in the context of his larger interest in legitimacy and the nature of a "good society." Indeed, his overall concern in the *Social Contract*, and other political writings, is to provide practical political principles by which to evaluate a legitimate social order. His objective is twofold: 1) to provide a rational explanation concerning the legitimacy of the social tie, and 2) to indicate the basis, justification and limitation of political obligation and political authority. More precisely, as Hammond notes, Rousseau's main concern is "to justify the authority

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an examination of "political religions" in the new nations, and Wilson (1979), for a discussion of "public religion" in American culture).

[9] Durkheim gives the state a role in the organization of the cult. However, as the "organ of consciousness of society" the state is the repository of higher, universal, and sacred principles such as the 'cult of the individual' or 'moral individualism.' As Hughey has rightly noted (1983:67), in Durkheim's terms, "it is the universal, humanistic values which transcend the state... and not the state itself which is important."

to set jurisdictional boundaries and invoke transcendental sanctions." In order to solve these problems, Rousseau turns to civil religion (Hammond, 1980:43).

Rousseau claims that the power of the state rests not on force but on moral grounds that legitimize it, and that "no State has ever been founded without a religious basis" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:272). In pagan times, Rousseau argues, cult and government were one and the same thing. Each state had its "own cult and its gods,"and made no distinction between "its god and its laws." Political wars were of necessity theological--the "provinces of the gods were, so to speak, fixed by the boundaries of nations" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:269-270). Rousseau observes that Christianity, by setting up the kingdom of God, separated the theological from the political system, made the state "no longer one" and "brought about the internal divisions which have never ceased to trouble Christian peoples" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:270). Jurisdictional disputes between ecclesiastical and temporal authorities endangered forever the unity of society. The spirit of Christianity, Rousseau argues, introduced not only "the most violent of earthly despotisms" but also a conflict of jurisdiction and a division of power which have made "all good polity impossible in Christians States." Ever since the sacred cult and the state became independent systems, Rousseau contends, "men have never succeeded in finding out whether they were bound to obey the master or the priest" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:270). Rousseau charges that, among many Christian writers, only Hobbes had the necessary vision to understand this problem. He "dared to propose the reunion of the two heads of the eagle," and the restoration of political unity, without which "no State or government will ever be rightly constituted" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:271). According to Rousseau, Hobbes perceived the "evil," proposed a "solution," the reunion of Church and State, but "erred" in trying to incorporate

Christianity into his system for, with its "domineering spirit, Christianity would never consent to be subordinate to the state" (Henry, 1979:150).

So Rousseau, who like Hobbes addresses the politico-religious problem, starts with two important assumptions. Firstly, that the state *needs* a religious foundation, and secondly that the "law of Christianity" not only harms, but weakens the constitution of the state (1762/1973:272). Rousseau distinguishes three varieties of religion: the religion "of the citizen," the religion "of the priest," and that "of man." The religion of the citizen, "codified in a single country," has its dogmas, rites, and cults ordained by law. It has its "own tutelary patrons" and gods. Duties and rights are circumscribed to a particular nation. Borrowing directly from Machiavelli, Rousseau argues that the religion of the citizen is politically beneficial for it "teaches them that service done to the State is service done to its tutelary god."[10] This religion instills a love of the laws and makes the country the object of adoration. By sacralizing the state and the nation it produces loyal citizens (Casanova, 1994:59). However, it is founded on "lies and error." It is potentially tyrannous and restrictive, and may lead to intolerance and national chauvinism. It places a nation in a constant state of alert, or war, with respect to all others, deeply endangering its security. It is harmful, again, Rousseau notes, when it "breathes fire," makes people "bloodthirsty," and "regards as sacred the act of killing" those who do not believe in its gods (Rousseau, 1762/1973:273).

The religion of the priest bifurcates man's loyalties. It gives him "two codes of legislation, two rulers, and two countries." Rousseau places in this category Roman Christianity, and "the

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[10] The influence of Machiavelli's views on Rousseau's political philosophy is quite marked, as will become apparent in the discussion that follows. For example, for Machiavelli (Rousseau would later agree), it was critical that the prince promotes a religion that "teaches that he who best serves the State best serves the gods" (Machiavelli. Cited in Allen, 1960:459).

religions of the Lamas and of the Japanese," all of them leading, according to him, to a sort of "mixed and antisocial" frame of mind. Torn between allegiance to the church and allegiance to the state, and therefore subject to different authorities, man's duties collide. He cannot be "faithful both to religion and citizenship" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:272).[11] Rousseau tells us this religion is so "clearly harmful," that he finds "it is a waste of time" to try to prove it. It destroys social unity and anything that destroys the social harmony "is worthless." Moreover, it confuses and agitates 'man.' It forces him to enter into a turmoil of contradictions. For Rousseau this is inadmissible, for any social institution that "sets man at odds with himself" is also "worthless." Finally, the essential teaching of the religion of the priest is salvation. Because resignation is essential to achieve salvation, as a logical necessity, this religion engenders servile and dependent subjects (Rousseau, 1762/1973:272, 275).[12] As such, it is not only harmful but politically useless and unacceptable. The dual sovereignty model of priestly religions is also politically subversive, for "the priestly interest would always be stronger than that of the State" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:271). While in theory authority is divided between church and state, in practice it means that "priests are tempted to usurp

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[11] Neither Durkheim nor Rousseau had any intention of incorporating women into their general theories. Unless they specifically made reference to women, they spoke from a male world and to a male audience. Rousseau, in particular, is referring to political society, an area from where he explicitly excluded women. So, in discussing their ideas, I have opted to use "man," "he," "him" for I do not want to give them more credit than they deserve.

[12] Machiavellis' argument is not very dissimilar. Religion, he notes, "has glorified humble and contemplative men, rather than men of action. It has assigned humility, abnegation and contempt for mundane things as the highest virtue. This has made the world weak and handed it over to the wicked who have been able to run it successfully since they know that the majority of men, having paradise as their goal will not try to avenge their injuries but learn instead how to bear the burden" (cited in Larrain, 1979:18).

temporal authority for themselves, and to this extent undercut the established authority of the state" (Beiner, 1993:618).[13]

Finally, Rousseau speaks of the religion of man or Christianity but not the "corrupted" Christianity of his day. This religion, Rousseau notes, is universal, it unites everybody as children of God and, hence, as brothers. It is the true "natural" religion of the Gospel "pure and simple." It has "no altars, temples, rites" and is solely devoted to the cult of God. But Rousseau perceives a difficulty here as well. The religion of man, while certainly trustworthy, does not bind all men to the state. On the contrary, it has the effect of removing them from worldly affairs, for "the country of the Christian is not of this world" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:273, 274). It may be religiously true, but it is politically ineffective.

In short, the main purpose of Rousseau's chapter on civil religion in the *Social Contract* is to show that the "reconciliation of Christianity with the requirements of politics is a hopeless one" (Beiner, 1993:619). One cannot speak of a "Christian republic," Rousseau contends, because "the terms are mutually exclusive."[14] By preaching servitude and dependence, the "spirit" of Christianity

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[13] Rousseau is concerned with the emergence of structures of religious authority that are, in principle, independent of the state. In other words, his concern is the sharp tension that may develop between spiritual and temporal power, or between the representatives of religious truth and political authority. The conflict "between pope and emperor in medieval Europe, the tension between Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism at the T'ang court, and the struggle between the mullahs and the politicians in Iran today," are some historical examples of the problem Rousseau is trying to identify (Bellah, 1980:x).

[14] Machiavelli had noticed the antipolitical character of Christianity and proposed some kind of anti-Christian politics which he thought could be achieved by going back to Roman paganism (Beiner, 1993:619). Rousseau agrees with his diagnosis of the problem, but rejects the solution. Christianity is an entirely spiritual, other worldly religion. "Imagine," Rousseau tells us, "your Christian republic face to face with Sparta or Rome: the pious Christians will be beaten, crushed, destroyed..." And then adds, the "soldiers of Fabius" swore and kept their oath "not to conquer or die, but to come back victorious..." Rousseau insists that Christians could never have taken such an oath, they could have never been truly good and glorious soldiers for they "would have looked on it as tempting God." It is an either/or proposition. One is either a citizen of the republic or a "citizen of the Church" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:274-275). His answer is not to go back to Roman paganism, but to create instead a secular creed. As Bellah has pointed out, Rousseau's concern has been shared by most of the great republican theorists, from Machiavelli to de Tocqueville, who have also speculated whether Christianity could ever produce good citizens (Bellah, 1978:16).

is "favourable to tyranny" for true Christians are "made to be slaves, and they know it and do not much mind . . . " (Rousseau, 1762/1973:275).

While Rousseau is convinced that religion is "the very foundation of the state," he understands at the same time that all three existing forms of religion are not conducive to a "good polity" (Casanova, 1994:59). Politically considered, all three religions are flawed. At the same time, he is aware that the "Age of Reason" is inevitably leading toward the secularization of the world. However, while most Enlightenment thinkers agreed that religion was bound to disappear with the collapse of the ancient regime, Rousseau does not celebrate its agony and possible death. On the contrary, he fears the political consequences of a social order without some kind of religion (Demerath and Williams, 1985:155; Casanova, 1994:32). Agreeing with the Machiavellian thesis that accords political utility to religion, he insists that religion, even in the era of enlightenment, is still valuable to the body politic.[15] Rousseau suggests, in fact, that there is an inseparable connection between religion and political stability: "as soon as men live in society, they require a religion to maintain them there. Never have a people continued nor will they ever continue without religion" (cited in Vaughan, 1915:I:87). Simply put, Rousseau assumes that religion is politically indispensable for it is the base on which the state is legitimately anchored. By providing a source of transcendent morality, the authority of the state is perceived as if ordained by God. Civic duties become moral obligations.

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[15] The indispensability of religion as a prerequisite for political stability is an idea that can be found throughout the history of socio-political thought. Social thinkers and politicians of all ages have been concerned with the connection between religion and political order. A belief in a Divinity has been considered by many as absolutely necessary. Rousseau, for example, writes in *Emile* (1911:255), "if there is no God, the wicked is right and the good man is nothing but a fool." Voltaire's aphorism "If there were no God, it would be necessary to invent him" (cited in Noone, 1980:134), and in more modern times, Eisenhower's famous remark "Our government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith--and I don't care what it is" (cited in Bellah, 1976:156), are some examples of this orientation.

Rousseau is writing in an age when the feudal order is rapidly decaying. The Christian faith has been, to a large extent, shattered by the forces of the Enlightenment. The modern nation-state is only beginning to emerge, and religion appears to be losing its legitimating capacity. Where medieval philosophers had interpreted the universe in theological terms, now reason, science and logic replace the traditional authority of the church. The new order lacks the means to legitimate the authority required to secure social cohesion. A new legitimation mechanism is needed. Once again, Machiavelli's work helps Rousseau on this issue. Machiavelli points out in his *Discourses* that "new religions are 'due to men' rather than 'due to heaven,' that innovations in, and transformations of, religious belief and practice are legitimate objects of statecraft" (cited in Beiner, 1993:630). Rousseau agrees. His philosophical project entails the creation of a new religious belief made serviceable for politics. It is in this context that he introduces the idea of a civil creed as a necessary element of the modern polity.

As a liberal, Rousseau concedes that each citizen is free to believe and worship as he pleases. Each individual is free "in what does not harm others." Rousseau declares that subjects are accountable for their opinions and beliefs only when "they matter to the community." However, he adds that "it matters very much to the community that each citizen should have a religion. That will make him love his duty . . . " Hence, the dogmas of such religion "concern the State and its members" only when they refer to the duties that bound each citizen to all others (Rousseau, 1762/1973:275-276).

Given the fact that throughout history political institutions have relied or even depended upon religious legitimacy, Rousseau postulates the need for a new religion, a "purely civil profession of faith." The "articles" of such religion should be dictated by the Sovereign, "not exactly as religious

dogmas," but rather as "social sentiments without which a man cannot be a good citizen or a faithful subject" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:276).[16] These canons of faith

> . . . ought to be simple, few in number, precisely fixed, and without explanation or comment. The existence of a powerful, wise, and benevolent Divinity, who foresees and provides the life to come, the happiness of the just, and the punishment of the wicked, the sanctity of the social contract and the laws: these are its positive dogmas. Its negative dogmas I would confine to one--intolerance . . . (1762/1973:276).

He explicitly distinguishes these 'articles' of faith from every kind of religious dogmatism (Merquior, 1980:37). Members of the social contract are not held accountable for their opinions, or for their specific religious orientation, but only for their moral obligations and civic duties. But, by decreeing the "sanctity of the social contract and the law" Rousseau makes the observance of civil responsibilities and duties "a spiritual duty" (Macfarlane, 1970:68). Hence, the social effects of civil religion are to be similar, though not identical, to the role that Christianity had fulfilled in Europe in previous centuries, especially its role in promoting cohesion and morale (Selznick, 1992:424). In short, Rousseau's civil religion was intended as a kind of natural religion, but one which concerns itself with moral and civic duties to other individuals. Whatever beliefs individuals have "concerning their own personal salvation is of no interest to Rousseau" (Masters, 1968:88). It is only when individuals' lives "are touched by the requirements of the common good, [that] they must accommodate their personal views to public needs" (DeLue, 1997:157). In such a case, everyone is asked to accept and support the doctrines of civil religion, for without a religion civil society

[16] The *sovereign* for Rousseau is only a "corporate entity," having an abstract and collective existence, so that the idea attached to this concept does not refer to a single individual. However, it falls in the hands of the state to execute what the "sovereign want[s] in the manner that he require[s]" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:283).

becomes extremely vulnerable. Its dogmas are a minimum requirement of good citizenship. Individuals who violate civic responsibilities and citizen norms can be removed from society. Rousseau decrees that those who break the social compact "must be removed by exile as a violator of the compact, or by death as a public enemy" (1762/1973:190).

Hence, civil religion would define common values and help maintain a sense of community and cohesion among the members of the society. It would make possible a common basis "that could sustain a community's quest to define and to maintain the general good" (DeLue, 1997:157). Civil religion would inspire "sentiments" conducive to civic virtue. It would affirm and foment, in short, those sentiments "that prompt a man to respect and uphold the contract and its laws" (Noone, 1980:140).

Having distinguished between traditional religion or religions of salvation (a personal and purely private faith satisfying individual needs), and the civic creed (a national, public faith for the common good), Rousseau leaves no doubt that the latter has to be imposed.[17] It is the responsibility of the state to have its cult, to fix its dogmas, and to force them upon its citizens without "explanation or comment." This is necessary to minimize social division, and to maximize social stability and social solidarity. Civil religion in a Rousseauan sense, is essentially a political religion whose function is to act as the cult of the civic community, and as the pillar of the state. Rousseau, in fact, conceived civil religion essentially an instrumental political phenomenon to "secure loyalty to a contingent social order" (Wilson, 1971:17).

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[17] Rousseau equates the concept of the "common good" with the intent of the general will. In Rousseau's terms the end of the state is the common good. He notes that the opposition of private interests has made society "necessary," but it is the "harmony" of "these same interests" that has made it "possible." There must be some point of convergence between all interests, otherwise no society could exist. Hence, "that which is common to these different interests forms the social bond" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:182).

Rousseau suggests that a belief in God is essential for the common good. It instills both the fear that evil will be punished and the hope that virtue will be rewarded. In this sense, his notion of *civil religion* is "religious." However, it is also religious in another sense. It declares the "sanctity" of the social contract, the "sacredness" of the law, and citizens' obligation to be religiously disposed to "love their duties." A belief in the sanctity of the contract implies not only a belief in a God who sanctifies it, but also a "transcendent source of political obligation," and a transcendent source of public morality (Noone, 1980:148). However, as Hammond has noted (1980:42), it is at the same time "civil" because its sentiments are those of "sociability" necessary to be both "a good citizen [and] a faithful subject." It is "civil" again because it is concerned with citizenship and with the unity of the social body.

It should be stressed, however, that Rousseau's objective is essentially political, not religious. He is aware that there can no longer be "any exclusive national religion" holding a monopoly of religious authority. In fact, he favours religious pluralism, i.e., the official toleration of religious differences. However, his original question recurs: How can individuals be brought together in a secular and increasingly pluralistic society? How can the modern state be legitimized? These are two basic questions that dominate the whole of Rousseau's doctrine.

Noone (1980:145) notes that Rousseau realized that religious divisiveness could only be transcended by generating deep fervour for an exclusively worldly goal: "a love of country independent of, but not necessarily contrary to, a love of God." He argues that Rousseau saw the need of strengthening the social tie "by encouraging a type of emotional patriotism best exemplified by Sparta." In the process, Rousseau ended up investing the nation and the state with a religious aura, and elevating citizenship to quasi-sacred heights. This helps explain why Rousseau has been

referred to as the "prophet of nationalism." As Sherover has argued, his notion of citizenship entails that of patriotism. He has also been called the prophet of nationalism because of the central place he gives to the common national interest (Sherover, 1984:212, note363).

In short, Rousseau's answer to the problem of legitimation and social solidarity in the modern world, is the creation of a national civic religion, capable of binding all individuals to the state. Rousseau's intention was not to create a religion strictly comparable to traditional religions. Civil religion was not to be just another religion--it was to be an authoritarian religion specifically designed to prop up the political order (i.e., the state). The civic profession of faith would serve both as religion prescribing "the true cult of the Divinity" and also as the "cult of the Legislator, the divine ordering force in human affairs" (Henry, 1979:172). Noone is right in affirming that the "pragmatic import" of this religion is "purely and simply secular." One may also add that is purely and simply political. The civil creed, as Noone notes, was not created for the sake of the individual. Rather, it was intended as a means for strengthening the constitution of the state.[18] Citizens are told, and to a large extent forced, to "love their duties." Obviously, the duties in question are not religious. Had Rousseau's intention been more religious than secular, Noone notes, he would have created a version more in tune with "what he took to be the pure, uncorrupted and simple faith of the Gospels." But this would have run counter to Rousseau's purposes, for the Gospels preach "the brotherhood of all men," encouraging a global and cosmopolitan allegiance. However, "cosmopolitan brotherhood rules out total devotion to a specific, national polity" (Noone, 1980:149-151). In short, while there is little doubt that Rousseau's objective is essentially secular and political,

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[18] Phillip E. Hammond (1980a) takes the position that civil religion, in Rousseau's meaning of the term, is independent of both church and state. I strongly disagree with Hammond's interpretation. I will return to this point in Chapter Four.

he promotes it via a religiously enforced social unity which, he believes, is required for true political health. In other words, he remains convinced that a religiously-based source of legitimation is absolutely essential. Paradoxically, Rousseau ends up creating a twin version of the "religion of the citizen" that he had originally rejected.

This represents an ironic lack of foresight on his part. While he recognizes that the religion of the citizen places the people in a "natural" state of warfare and may lead to "sacred" acts of killings, he does not foresee that his own version of civil religion may become as tyrannous and blood thirsty as the religion of the citizen he rejects. The sovereign, Rousseau claims, after fixing the articles of the civic faith cannot "compel" anyone to believe them. Yet, it can "banish from the State" those who refuse to believe. But, the state can extend its iron arm even further: "If anyone, after publicly recognizing these dogmas, behaves as if he does not believe them, let him be punished by death: he has committed the worst of all crimes, that of lying before the law . . . " (Rousseau, 1762/1973:276).

The most serious problem is that the dogmas of civil religion cannot be changed, for Rousseau speaks of the civil creed as "though it were some sort of 'a priori' condition of society itself" (Noone, 1980:135). Citizens are forced to accept them for fear of "banishment" or "death." Nonbelievers are automatically exiled. I will come back to this point later in my discussion of state-directed civil religion, and more importantly, in Chapter Five.

If my reading of Rousseau is correct, there is a high degree of similarity between the "religion of the citizen" and "civil religion." They both lend themselves to political abuse and may lead to the "furies of fanaticism" and untold bloodshed. In the final analysis they are of the same nature, and come close to being one and the same religion. They may not be identical twins, but they are

certainly political siblings. That this is so, should come as no surprise. In the *Geneva Manuscripts* (an earlier version of *The Social Contract)*, Rousseau anticipates that the "advantages of the religion of man and the citizen will be combined" (cited in Beiner, 1993:634). What is surprising, however, is the lack of attention that scholars have given to this point. Out of a massive literature on civil religion, I could only find a few articles that noticed the implications of Rousseau's doctrine (Casanova, 1994; Giner, 1993; Demerath and Williams, 1985; Gehrig, 1981b; Hammond, 1974; Wilson, 1979). Most authors appear content to make a passing reference to Rousseau as the thinker who coined the term. Then they continue to discuss civil religion in Durkheim's terms, without any attempt to explain the critical differences between these two traditions.[19]

I.3 Rousseau's Ideal Citizen

In *The Social Contract* Rousseau conceives society as originating in, or being based on, an agreement between free individuals and the state. He believes that individuals entering into the social contract do not surrender their liberty one to another. Rather, they are transferring it to a new moral person--the Sovereign State. The state becomes, in Rousseau's own words, a *persona facta* (Rousseau, 1762/1973:177). According to Rousseau, man loses his *natural liberty* in order to gain *civil liberties*. Natural liberty is that which is grounded on the "strength" of each individual to attain what he wishes. Civil liberty, on the other hand, is limited not by force, but by the general will. He conceives the general will as the common interest or collective will of a free, egalitarian, and law-making society. The general will is concerned with what is good for the community as a whole and not with purely individual pursuits. So, civil liberty gives man "moral freedom," and makes him

[19] See Introduction, footnote #1.

"truly master of himself." When individuals attempt to satisfy every impulse or appetite they become mere slaves, while submission to the general will or "the law one prescribes to oneself is freedom" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:177-178). Rousseau assumes that when individuals submit themselves to the general will they obey nobody but themselves.

Rousseau makes a distinction between a 'general will' and a 'particular will.' The former, as already noted, is oriented towards the good of the community, the latter towards its own good, without reference to the interests and wishes of others. Once the general will becomes law, however, it is morally binding on all individuals. The preeminence of the general will is, according to Rousseau, "the first" public principle and the "fundamental rule of government" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:123). Rousseau concedes that "man's particular interest" may speak a different language from the "common interest." This would happen when man's particular will may be contrary to the general will he has as a citizen. It would be devastating for the body politic, Rousseau warns, if an individual is allowed to enjoy the "rights" of a citizen without being willing to fulfill the "duties" he owes the state.

Thus, in theoretical terms Rousseau's doctrine finds its expression in the view that the state is based not on power, but on the will of its members. Power is in the hands of the "collective sovereign," i.e., the people (Cole, 1973:xxv). But while the contract gives sovereignty to the people, it is the political community which is sovereign, not its individual members. As a member of a society based on a particular social contract, every individual is under the obligation to act and behave as a "good citizen," so as to further the good of the society. A good citizen is a "virtuous man" who must be able to overcome his natural selfishness and subordinate his will to the general will. A good citizen, in short, is morally obliged by the social contract. Rousseau, in fact,

conceives the general will in strictly ethical terms. That is, as a "principle of moral conduct applied to political behaviour." In pragmatic terms, it means that "the General Will of the State is final in relation to its own citizens . . . " (Cole, 1973:xxxiv-vi). In other words, Rousseau's conception of the "ideal citizen" is that of an individual "completely absorbed by the state" (Noone, 1980:140).

How can citizens be forced to speak the same language of the general will and still remain free? How can social stability be maintained? This is the fundamental problem *The Social Contract* (particularly the chapter on civil religion) tries to address. Rousseau's answer seems quite simple: instill in each citizen a profound love for his country and its laws, and make the knot of the social tie indestructible. For the social tie to be morally binding and legally upheld, laws are essential. They are the "unique motive force" of the body politic. Without the laws, the state "is only a body without a soul . . . " (Rousseau, 1762/1973:291). Simply put, Rousseau assumes that law-abiding individuals, assembled under a common morality, will willingly submit to the general will and seek the common interest. Each individual, not "naturally" but through social agreement or convention, will wish the common good and avoid public harm. To attain this aim, however, the citizenry needs to be educated in the qualities of good citizenship. Good citizenship, in turn, has to be imposed and enforced through what Willaime (1993) has called *L'Etat Educateur*. This is the fundamental underlying principle of the civil creed, and one of the functions Rousseau assigns to civil religion in the modern world. In short, *The Social Contract* focuses on the political implications of public civility and morality. Its unifying thread is the need for a common ideology for a cohesive legitimate society. In the final analysis, civil religion in Rousseauan terms is nothing less than a historically

specific state ideology, but of a particular variety--it has a "transcendent" focus and an element of "sacredness" built into it.[20]

As Noone has written (1980:154), there is something dramatically "sad," about the civil creed. In previous chapters Rousseau presents a theory of political obligation, grounded in the liberal idea of the "sovereignty of man." His main concern is to indicate clearly the most fundamental principles of political rule which ought to underlie the organization of the state. Rules and obligations are based on social conventions, the most important one being the social contract. This special type of convention celebrates individual autonomy and freedom. The contract, in fact, promises to "reconcile freedom and obligation." Individuals voluntarily join together to form a political community. The resulting political community is not a natural phenomenon, it is an act of will on the part of each individual.

The general will and the cult of the state, however, are conceived in authoritarian terms. On the surface it would appear that the social contract coerces the individual "only to the extent that he voluntarily accepts the coercion" (Noone, 1980:154). The problem is that Rousseau assumes that the general will is "always upright and always tends to the public advantage." While it may be "often deceived," it is "never corrupted" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:184-185). Add to this that the sovereign power is "absolute, sacred, and inviolable . . . " (Rousseau, 1762/1973:188), together with his argument that authority must remain undivided, and that the "Sovereign is sole judge of what is

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[20] This is in opposition to ex-Soviet Marxism, or China's Maoism, for example, where the state ideology while certainly imbued with a certain sense of "sacredness" is devoid of a transcendental meaning. For an interesting study of Soviet Marxism-Leninism as a political religion, see Lane (1981), for an examination of the religious "nature" of Russian Marxism and its civil ceremonies, see Zeldin (1969) and McDowell (1974). For an argument that communism or Maoism cannot and should not be considered a religion, see West (1980). West argues that insofar as these political doctrines deny "the reality of the Holy as an objective and transcendent reality," they are just "substitutes" for religion, not real religions (1980:35).

important" for the community, and it is not difficult to perceive the justification of authoritarianism and coercion (Rousseau, 1762/1973:186). Moreover, Rousseau "undermines" the most basic principles of liberalism for "consent once given is now irrevocable, and it is God, not man, that sanctifies the contract" (Noone, 1980:154).

Rousseau's theory has a profound built in tension--the tension between his liberal ideas (i.e., the right of every individual against any restriction), and his antiliberal prescriptions (i.e., the total submission of the individual to the general will and to the state). Indeed it is not difficult to discern in his writings a permanent conflict between the individual and the citizen, between the natural 'man' and the social 'man,' between natural freedom and civil freedom, and finally, between a particular egoistic will and a general unselfish will (Henry, 1979:152). As Merquior notes, Rousseau's intention of trying to harmonize the tension between the individual and the citizen remained, throughout his intellectual career, an "insurmountable antithesis," "an insoluble conflict"--one that he was never able to resolve (1979:46).

I.4 Durkheim on Civil Religion

More than a hundred years later, Durkheim also utilized the notion of civil religion without ever mentioning the term itself. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* he indicates that the purpose of his work is to study, analyse, and explain "the most primitive and simple religion which is actually known" (1912/1961a:13). He discovers this primitive and simple religion in the totemism of Australian aborigines. He is particularly interested in studying the beliefs and rites which compose it.

For Durkheim, totemism is inseparable from a social order organized on a clan basis. Totemism and the clan "mutually imply each other" (1912/1961a:194-195). The totem serves a dual symbolic function, it expresses society and it has a religious character. The totem is not only a "collective label" but the symbol or "flag" of the clan. At the same time, it is the material, external expression of what he calls the "totemic principle or god" (1912/1961a:236). The collective totem, Durkheim notes, represents the "civil status" of each individual, a status which is not acquired by conscious design, but by birth right (1912/1961a:188). He traces the origins of the totemic filiation to the "uterine line" for, in the dawn of the human race, each individual had no other totem than that of their mother (1912/1961a:289). While the totem constitutes the source of the "moral life" of the clan, the totemic principle is a "moral power" (1912/1961a:219).

Concurring with Rousseau, Durkheim notes that because god and society "are only one," the clan simultaneously symbolizes both (1912/1961a:236). This religious and civic unity is best observed during the periodic gatherings and assemblies of the Australian primitives. It is in the midst of these "effervescent" gatherings, and "out of this effervescence itself" that the idea of religion seems to be born (1912/1961a:250). This fundamentally social event, the assembly of the clan, not only inspires a religious feeling but also contributes to the maintenance of social integration. Its function is the preservation of the clan's self-identity and social cohesion. But the clan's unity and cohesion is not the result of coercive forces. Rather, it comes solely from their having the same name and the same emblem.

The major argument of *The Elementary Forms* is that religion, its origin, its function and its meaning, can only be understood and explained by reference to society. The "origin of religion is shown to be the 'effervescence' of the periodic assemblies of society; the function is seen as social

integration; and the meaning is understood to be society's symbolic worship of itself" (Breytspraak, 1973:76). Religion, Durkheim believes, is the most important integrator of society. It is indispensable in any social order, for it fosters the shared beliefs, sentiments, and values required to promote social cohesion, political stability and social solidarity.

So, Durkheim identifies the heart of religion, any religion, with the experience of sociality itself (Cristi and Dawson, 1996:322). If he finds religion to be the origin of "all that is essential in society," it is because he believes that "the idea of society is the soul of religion" (Durkheim, 1961a:466). Durkheim claims that the very constitution of society is 'by definition' a religious phenomenon. So, from his perspective, religious society and civil society are "coterminous," they both have the same or coincident boundaries. They both bind people together in a 'moral community,' and they both represent a "collectivity that is nothing if not religious at its base ..." (Demerath and Williams 1985:156). Durkheim defines religion as a system of shared values, beliefs, and practices, relating to sacred things, which unites into "one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them" (Durkheim, 1912/1961a:62). He is convinced that insofar as there are individuals who join together to form a group, there will always be some common religion or some common faith between them.

Durkheim claims that because there is "something eternal" in religion, because religion is an inherent part of any social group, individuals have a "need" to profess collectively their faith. He, thus, argues that "[t]here can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and collective ideas which make its unity and its personality" (1912/1961a:474-475). Indeed, Durkheim believes that the moral unity of a society can be achieved only through ceremonies and gatherings where individuals "reaffirm in common their

common sentiments." Gatherings, in turn, should be revitalized through rites which are "ways of behaving [that] only come into being at the heart of the assembled groups." They constitute the means by which the social bonding of the group is reasserted. They create, maintain, and re-create particular "mental states" within the group (1912/1961a:22). Hence, civic rituals arise which are, if not identical, very similar to religious ceremonies.

Sacred rites, Durkheim argues, are found in any society. They perform the same 'function' today that they did in "lower" societies. They secure and preserve social and moral order by uniting the collectivity around some common morality. They act as the engine that transports the individual into an extraordinary state of consciousness. It is under these "stimulating" influences that "society makes itself felt" (Durkheim, 1912/1975:129). This is the reason why Durkheim finds no essential difference between an assembly of Australian aborigines or contemporary individuals celebrating radically different events. Their objectives are the same, and so are the "results" and the "processes" used to attain those results. Hence, he sees no difference between festivities of Christians commemorating the birth of Christ, or of "Jews recalling the Exodus," or of an assembly of citizens honouring some great national event. It follows that the collective representations of the Arunta, i.e., their beliefs and rites, are no different from collective representations in modern societies stressing, for example, the glories of the past or the promulgation of a new legal system (1912/1961a:475).

In Durkheim's view, both religious ceremonies and mundane feasts produce a state of "effervescence" and excitement that are akin to "the religious state." So, the "very idea" of a religious ritual is often associated with the idea of a feast. Inversely, every feast, including those that have nonreligious origins, has certain characteristics of the religious ceremony (1912/1961a:427-

428). For this reason he believes that "all parties, political, economic and confessional" periodically instigate meetings so that their followers can rekindle their enthusiasm and renovate their "common faith" (Durkheim, 1912/1975:128).

Durkheim warns that if we cannot understand civic festivities in this light, it is because we are going through "a transitional phase, one of moral mediocrity" (1912/1961a:475). By moral mediocrity he means that we have lost a sense of continuity with the past, and we have also lost the sense of community that characterized premodern societies. Durkheim, in fact, laments that modern individuals do not show enthusiasm for the "great things of the past." He warns that the "creative effervescence" of our predecessors is in the process of becoming extinct. What is even worse, individuals have lost the "need" to maintain the collective memory alive. For Durkheim this represents a serious danger, and it is in this context that he argues that festivals and celebrations are essential to keep collective representations alive. They are necessary to rekindle the great principles, values, and ideas "which have guided humanity" (1912/1961a:474-476).

Durkheim is convinced that behind major historical turning points there has always been an upsurge of "collective effervescence." Indeed, it is to collective effervescence that Durkheim gives credit for events as great and varied as the French Scholasticism of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Protestant Reformation, the French Revolution, and even the socialist disturbances of the nineteenth century (Hughey, 1983:177). In his view, during great revolutionary or creative periods, social solidarity tends to be stronger. The intense "abnormal activity" which results acts as a stimulus on the individual. When individuals find themselves at the "heart of an assembly," breathing, so to speak, a "common passion," they are capable of sentiments and actions that would have been impossible if left on their own. They are lifted out of their "normal level." Under the

influence of collective upheavals "men become quite different." In fact, Durkheim locates at the root of 'collective effervescence' acts ranging from "superhuman heroism [to] bloodthirsty barbarism" (Durkheim, 1912/1975:129).

Durkheim sees the totemic cult as a "great moral" and collective force. It is through the totemic cult that individuals become united, not only by kinship or bonds of blood, but "by a community of interests and tradition." When they assemble to celebrate, they become "conscious of their moral unity" (1912/1961a:432). Modern individuals are scarcely different. To be sure, their sense of the sacred is not the same. It might be attached to ideas, flags or heads of states rather than to rocks, springs, or ancestral animals (Wuthnow, 1994:2). In other words, the religiously-based conscience collective fades away, but the sense of the sacred remains. For human beings have an incredible capacity for endlessly "creating sacred things out of nothing." One has only to think, Durkheim notes, about the sacred character that has been attributed to nobles and princes and the unique consideration given to them (Durkheim, 1912/1975:131).

So, in modern society, moral beliefs, rituals, and public festivities still reinforce identification with, and commitment to values, but of a different kind. Collective 'effervescence' may be experienced through values such as patriotism and national loyalty, but the sentiments felt in these circumstances, Durkheim would argue, are closely related to the religious sentiments experienced by Australian aborigines. In fact, Durkheim seems to suggest that the modern form of "totemism" is to be found in nationalism--a clearly new and distinct type of collective activity. As Purdy has noted (1982:309), from Durkheim's perspective, feelings of patriotism toward the nation are, to a certain extent, the modern equivalent to the moral unity experienced by the Arunta of Australia through allegiance to the clan.

While Durkheim emphasizes the importance of rites, assemblies, and festivities, he also stresses the significance of education. In several of his writings he discusses the nature of a secular, national creed. In *Moral Education* (1925/1961b:260), he insists on the "need for [the] devotion and sacrifice that lies at the root of all moral life," and he suggests that devotion and sacrifice for one's country are values that should be transmitted to future generations. He maintains that French public schools must be "the guardians" of the French national character (1925/1975:192). In *Education and Sociology* (1922/1956:107) he repeats this idea, arguing that the role of French public schools is to "interpret and express the French spirit." In Durkheim's view, teachers not only need a profound and exceptional sense of vocation, they should also understand that they have a sacred and moral duty to perform. For the teacher is the "agent of a great moral person who transcends him: this is society. Just as the priest is the interpreter of his god, so the teacher is the interpreter of the great moral ideas of his time and country" (Durkheim, 1922/1956:89). As Wallace has noticed, Durkheim consistently reiterates the love of the country, and he sees "the creation of patriotic citizens as the primary aim of the public schools" (Wallace, 1973:4). Wallace's article expresses eloquently Durkheim's contribution to a secular ethic of citizenship, and to the French spirit of nationalism.[21]

Durkheim, along with other social thinkers at the beginning of the twentieth century, holds an evolutionary view of society. He shares the certainty that society has gone through different stages of structural transformations--from a "lower" primitive type to the emergent modern form. Thinkers such as Herbert Spencer and the utilitarian economists were convinced that an unbridgeable distance separated the "lower" and modern forms of society. They believed that the "'natural,'

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[21] Durkheim's ideas on education were actively supported by the state. For example, his work was required reading in the normal schools of France (Wallace, 1973:5). For more on this topic, see Richter (1960), who also discusses Durkheim's profound influence on public schools and teacher's colleges.

internally spontaneous and moral life of 'lower' societies (Gemeinschaft)," had been irrevocably replaced by the 'modern' type (Gesellschaft), produced by the 'wholly external stimulus of the state' and based upon egoistic, and hence nonmoral, pursuit of individual self-interest" (Hughey, 1983:11-12). As Hughey observes, in the former type of society, social order was perceived to be a natural phenomenon, while in the latter, social order was to be artificially produced (i.e., the result of a conscious effort). On this point, Durkheim takes a different stance, for he remains convinced that the true nature of society cannot and does not change. He observes that

> ...the life of large social agglomerations is just as natural as that of smaller groupings. It is no less internal. Outside of these purely individual actions (egoistic activity) there is a collective activity in our contemporary societies which is just as natural as that of smaller societies of previous ages. It is certainly different; it constitutes a distinct type, but however different they may be, there is no difference in nature between these two varieties of the same genus . . .

To this, he adds, "we have to choose: if society is originally a natural phenomenon, it stays such until the end of its life" (in a review of F. Tonnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, cited in Hughey, 1983:12).

Although the true nature of society remains the same, Durkheim anticipates a major restructuring of the sacred. The profound social and structural transformation that had taken place (i.e., increasing rates of moral density, social differentiation and a highly differentiated division of labour) would also affect the way the sacred is experienced in modern society. While the ancient religious symbols had celebrated collective values which were of interest to the group as a whole, he envisions that the sacred would eventually be located in the individual itself. Durkheim

conceptualizes social solidarity and integration in the modern world less in terms of collective sentiments and more in terms of the bonding between increasingly autonomous yet interdependent individuals. This would be reflected in "correspondingly individualized symbols of the sacred" (Beckford, 1989:26). Indeed, Durkheim comes to the conclusion that individualism represents the moral and religious expression of the *conscience collective* of the modern age. Moral individualism, which the 'Declarations of the Rights of Man' sought to achieve, is to become the basis of the "moral catechism" of modernity, the source of a new morality. He stresses that it is not to be confused with the "utilitarian egoism of Spencer and of the economists," for it involves a morality of cooperation and a profound respect for others. Because it is the sign of the modern age that everyone attends to their own private affairs in order to satisfy personal demands,

> ...we make our way, little by little towards a state, nearly achieved as of now, where the members of a single social group will have nothing in common among themselves except their humanity, except the constitutive attributes of the human person (*personne humaine)* in general (Durkheim, 1898/1973:51).

In Durkheim's *cult of the individual* each person is the repository of the sacred, and the symbol and source of a new morality.

Durkheim knows (as Rousseau did a century earlier) that religion in modern society "tends to embrace a smaller and smaller portion of social life" (Durkheim, 1895/1938:169). He is aware that religious institutions have been declining in power, and recognizes the critical role of industrialization for the accelerated rate of decline. However, it does not follow for him that the "*functions* which had traditionally been fulfilled by religion were also in decline" (Beckford, 1989:26). On the contrary, while he is convinced that religion's influence has diminished, he is no

less certain that it will never completely wither away. Religion is for him an essential and permanent feature of all human societies. He remains assured, therefore, that no matter what form religion might take, societies will continue to possess a moral and religious foundation. For he has no doubt that religions do not remain static, "that the religion of yesterday could not be that of tomorrow" (Durkheim, 1898/1973:51).

While Durkheim accepts the belief in the decline of traditional religion and in the inevitable advance of secularization, he does not exclude the possibility of the reappearance of universal religion, once the "moral mediocrity" of the modern age is overcome. He is hopeful, in fact, that local nationalism will eventually be replaced by internationalism or by the "religion of humanity" (Giner, 1993:23; Wallace, 1973:9).

Just like Rousseau before him, Durkheim is confronted with a serious obstacle. If for Rousseau the pressing issue had been how to reconcile the need for religion in an increasingly secularized world, Durkheim's riddle is how can the individual, who is becoming more and more autonomous, be "at once more individual and more solidary?" (Durkheim, 1893/1964:37). How can social solidarity be maintained and revitalized in a world where everybody attends to their own personal business? Durkheim's answer is that the harmonizing functions that religion performed in nonindustrial societies could be fulfilled by different agents in industrial societies. For example, he expects that religious institutions will be replaced by educational institutions (Wallace, 1973:3). Additionally, he believes intermediary associations (including religious groups) will play a major function in overcoming the problem of anomie.[22] Their role will be to bring the state closer to

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[22] Durkheim discusses 'anomie' for the first time in the context of the 'abnormal forms' of the division of labour brought about by the rapid development of industrialization and capitalism. In his view, both processes were characterized by an absence of precise 'rules' governing "the relations. . .between social functions," and by a lack of moral discipline. Anomie was especially evident in "industrial or commercial crises" and in the relations "between

ordinary citizens. Durkheim is concerned with the danger that the state might be "closed in upon itself" and, as a result, be separated from the people. Professional and occupational associations would solve this problem. In his view, they would play a vital role acting as agents between the state and the individual. That is, they would not only help or facilitate communication, but be, at the same time, the voice of those sectors of society that are less organized (Giddens, 1986:8). In short, intermediary associations would solve the problem of the remoteness of the state as the 'brain' or source of moral aims and ideals (Beckford, 1989:30).[23] As mentioned before, Durkheim also proposes to recreate the 'collective effervescence' of the past, by allowing individuals to relive the rich, emotional experience of the sacred through periodic gatherings. In this form, the modern individual, interdependent yet isolated, would have an opportunity to renew and strengthen the bonds attaching him to society (Durkheim, 1912/1975:128).

The civic creed, in Durkheim's terms, has its own life, it is naturally diffused throughout the whole society. Loyalty to the group is spontaneously affirmed every time the group meets together and celebrates ceremonies and rituals. The resulting social community is a natural phenomenon; it does not require an act of will on the part of each individual. Individuals join together to re-affirm common values. Civil religion presumably affirms values that are already "out there," that are already common, and are already widely shared.

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labour and capital." Because of the extreme rapidity with which industrial transformations had occurred, "interests in conflict" had not had time to achieve "equilibrium" (in Lukes, 1973:172). To ameliorate the ills of capitalism, Durkheim proposes to restore the 'guild' (occupational groups or corporations) in order to re-introduce morality into economic relations and bring "men a little peace, peace in their hearts and peace in their mutual relations" (in Lukes, 1973:267). Likewise, in *Suicide* he discusses 'conjugal anomie' as the result of the weakening of matrimonial rules and moral discipline.

[23] From Durkheim's point of view, the state is first and foremost a "moral" agent, but it is too distant from the people. For more on this, see Giddens (1986) *Durkheim on Politics and the State*, also, Hughey (1983) *Civil Religion and Moral Order*.

Durkheim's premise is that civil religion is not something to be *imposed* on the individual. Rather it is a cultural force *acting* upon him/her. Citizens are not *expected* to endorse the creed (or the religious sentiments associated with collective gatherings), Durkheim assumes that they spontaneously or naturally do so. Civil religion springs from society itself and is carried on every time the group meets and celebrates together. Social representations, values, beliefs, ingrained in the collective mind, are carried from generation to generation. It is not the power of the sovereign (or the state), but the power of society that coerces the individual.

Needless to say, Durkheim never asked himself the question of who controls collective rites, what individuals are more committed to them, or who benefits by its continued existence. Neither did he question the idea that religion may serve not society in general, but particular groups or individuals (Hughey, 1983:172). In other words, Durkheim's theory does not consider a range of phenomena such as conflict, exclusion of certain groups, coercion, or the imposition of dominant values, and the power of dominant groups.

Durkheim's contribution to political sociology has not been very significant. In his private life, he was "marginally" involved in politics, and during his intellectual lifetime he did not produce any major work concerned primarily with political analysis (Giddens, 1986:1). However, ever since Durkheim, sociologists of religion have been "intrigued" with the idea, or the possibility, that national or civil symbol systems represent "a modern functional alternative to traditional religious systems as sacred legitimations of the social order" (Stauffer, 1973:415).

I.5 Religion, Social Order, and the State

In the preceding discussion I have stressed the central ideas of Rousseau and Durkheim concerning civil religion. Any attempt at a critical analysis must be placed within a broader evaluation of their ideas, and the political consequences of their theories. But, as mentioned in the Introduction, there has been little effort to discern the "wall of separation" that exists between Rousseau and Durkheim on the civil religion issue.[24] As a result, there has been an even less serious attempt to recognize different varieties of civil religion.

It should be explicitly emphasized that both Rousseau and Durkheim are concerned with the so-called 'problem of order.' An examination of their writings leaves no doubt that for both thinkers religion plays an important role in the solution of this problem. That is, both conceive religion as necessary for social integration and societal harmony. Simple as it seems, this is a fact that has generally tended to be overlooked. Scholars refer to the integrative function of civil religion as if it were a Durkheimian design. Few seem to notice the radically divergent conceptions these thinkers have of *religion* and *integration*, and the role they assign to the state in accomplishing social order.

Durkheim is overwhelmingly concerned with the problem of morality. For him, the state within a democratic society is the main vehicle through which the values of moral individualism are implemented. He defines the state as the "organ of social thought," the 'ego' of the *conscience collective*. He emphasizes that the division of labour in industry must be imbued with "moral controls." These controls must be under the general moral authority and guidance of the state (Giddens, 1986:13). The state is for him "the institutional form which replaces that of the church

[24] I take the phrase "wall of separation" from the metaphor that has dominated American thinking about church and state relations ever since Jefferson first used it (see for example, Hammond ,1981; Bellah, 1978).

in traditional types of society." Giddens notes that Durkheim places "considerable emphasis upon the 'cognitive' as opposed to the 'active' significance of the state" (Giddens, 1986:9). This means that for Durkheim the state is founded not on force. It is far from being merely an association which "organizes domination," as Weber would argue (Weber, 1958:52). The state has moral authority. It exists for the moral development of its individual members. As a 'moral agency,' its role is to guarantee and advance the rights embodied in moral individualism. The state has, in fact, a significant role to play, "above and beyond the flux of particular opinions" in the advancement of the religion of humanity, and, hence, in the advancement of national and international harmony (Durkheim, 1898/1973:52). This means that the state is defined in terms of its ends, not the means at its disposal. This is very different, for example, from Weber's conceptualization of the state, in terms of the means which are specific to it, namely the exercise and organization of violence.

Not surprisingly, Durkheim focuses almost exclusively on the nature of moral ideas, moral conscience, and the nature of moral society. He concentrates primarily on the kind of moral authority conferred by the state and by religious systems and symbols. Obviously, the moral and religious values that emerge 'naturally' are supportive of the political order, but his concern is not political power but moral authority. For him, any religion, "well[s] up naturally from the bottom, from the very depths of the social experience itself" (Demerath and Williams, 1985:156). Simply put, religion is no more than the expression *of* a spontaneous civic order and societal processes. Religion, in Durkheim's terms, is inconceivable as a political resource.

From this Durkheimian proposition a series of 'problems' arise. For example, one difficulty often found in the literature, stemming directly from this Durkheimian assumption, centers around the lack of attention scholars have given to the issue of whether civil religion (anywhere and

anytime) is a 'spontaneous' form of civic faith, or whether it can be conceived as a political phenomenon within a larger political frame of reference. In the former view, civil religion would "emerge as a function *of* societal processes; while in the second instance, civil religion might be viewed as functional *for*" the political order (Garrett 1975, in Bourg, 1976:142). This oversight is hardly surprising if we consider that Durkheim's ideas have provided the model for the analysis and interpretation of the civil religion phenomenon.

However, had Rousseau's views been studied more closely or taken into consideration, a very different interpretation could be proposed. Strictly speaking, Rousseau is not concerned with the psychological or even collective 'needs' that religion satisfies. Rousseau's main concern, as discussed earlier, is the nature of legitimation and political power. In Rousseau's terms, civil religion has a political role to play. Being aware of religion's potential as an instrument of political stability and social cohesion, Rousseau advocates an imposed civic faith *for* the civic order. Civil religion is crucial for the promotion of political unity "without which no State or government will ever be rightly constituted" (1762/1973:271). This civic unity is, by no means, a spontaneous process. Rather, it is the outcome of conscious political practice. Accordingly, Rousseau designs a blueprint for the creation of an authoritarian religion "of and for the state" (Demerath & Williams, 1985:155). From his perspective, religion (including civil religion), is nothing more than the medium required to strengthen the constitution of the state.

As mentioned earlier, Rousseau argues that while the sovereign "can compel no one to believe [the articles of civic faith], it can banish from the State whoever does not believe them" (1762/1973:276). Banishment is necessary not because of "impiety," but because of "antisocial" behaviour. Taking this idea a step further, Rousseau proposes that antisocial beings ought to be

removed, not temporarily, but permanently from society. Antisocial behaviour deserves to be punished because it disrupts the social order. This is a serious offence, for the social order, according to Rousseau, is "a sacred right which is the basis of all other rights." This right, Rousseau argues, "does not come from nature." Rather, it must "be founded on conventions" (1762/1973:165-166). Civil religion, necessary to guarantee social order, is a central element of those conventions.

Civil religion, in Rousseau's view, is essential to integrate all individuals into a secular cult which will make them love their duties. Yet, in contrast to Durkheim, he realizes that the civic profession of faith is not the expression of common beliefs through collective rituals. Religious beliefs and practices (i.e., civil religion), imposed from above, are expected to be accepted by everyone. Rousseau's solution is quite paradoxical, for he formulates an anti-liberal prescription for the modern polity that stands diametrically opposed to the democratic, and to a certain extent, liberal tradition he represents. That is, Rousseau solves the problem he faces by "affirming simultaneously and inconsistently" the inalienable liberal right of religious freedom and freedom of speech, "which no sovereign has the right to abridge or control," and the need for a purely civic faith, whose dogmas are left entirely for the Sovereign to arrange (Casanova, 1994:60).

We have already seen that in Rousseau's terms the 'will of the people,' embodied in the Sovereign, speaks with one voice, and every citizen has an absolute duty to obey the dictates of the general will. The political machinery requires that individuals, as citizens, agree with the "general will." In order to avoid the social contract from becoming no more than "an empty formula" it should be "tacitly" understood that " whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body." Once the will of the people becomes law, it is not possible for someone to

disagree. This means nothing less than individuals will be forced to be good citizens, forced to acquire civic virtues, and even "forced to be free" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:177). Only as a 'man' (not as a citizen) does Rousseau allow the individual to differ from the common interest. But once all wills are united "into a single one" and the general will is declared, it becomes "an act of Sovereignty and constitutes law" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:183). The government will make sure that all citizens abide by the rules of the social contract. "Sovereignty is the law-making will; government, the force that executes its commands" (Merquior, 1979:22). One needs hardly to be reminded that for Rousseau it is the whole that is sovereign, not single individuals. In other words, freedom, for those who happen to be in disagreement with the collective will, really 'melts in the air.' Robert Nisbet, commenting on the authoritarianism of the Rousseauan doctrine, rightly notes that Rousseau proclaimed freedom, "but freedom *from society* never *from the state*" (in Merquior, 1979:63).

As Gehrig has noted, initiated "by and under a political ruler," civil religion, in Rousseau's terms, is intended to legitimize the polity without establishing a rival religious force. As a state-directed religion of "good citizenship," its primary function is to provide political legitimacy, political stability (Gehrig, 1981b:6). In short, Rousseau envisions civil religion both as a *source for* social cohesion and as a *force of* social coercion.[25] Good citizenship (civic consensus) is to Rousseau what value consensus is to Durkheim. What is fundamentally different is their consensual models and the means for achieving them. Hence, the pervasive tendency in the literature on this subject to overlook Rousseau, and to link the integrationist thesis primarily with Durkheim is, in my view, inaccurate.

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[25] This may help explain why Rousseau has been characterized as the "apostle of tyranny" and charges have been made that his doctrine helped form the basis of the twentieth-century totalitarian state. See, for example, Green (1955).

Summing up, Rousseau and Durkheim tackle the civic-religious issue and the relationship between state and civil society in radically different ways. Whereas in Durkheim's work the problem is posed in the context of morality, in Rousseau's writings the issue is primarily political. While Durkheim suggests that every society *naturally possesses* a religious foundation, Rousseau simply claims that every society *needs* one. For Durkheim a religious foundation is *inevitable*--a natural phenomenon. For Rousseau it is only *indispensable*, the result of social conventions. As a logical consequence, civil religion in Durkheim's terms needs not be carefully designed or premeditated. To a large extent, 'it just happens.' As an inherent ingredient of the *conscience collective*, civil religion is shared by the society as a whole--there is no need to impose it. Largely unconscious mechanisms are at work to unite, cohere and give solidarity to the group. Hence, Durkheim's main focus is on the cultural and religious aspect of civil religion. Its most important dimension is social, not political. In Rousseau's terms, by contrast, it is a pre-meditated religion, specifically intended to force individuals to respect and uphold the contract and its laws. In short, while Rousseau coined the term *civil religion*, he created, in fact, a *political religion* for the use and benefit of the state.

Chapter II

American Civil Religion and The American Debate

Civil religion in American society has been the subject of an extensive field of literature, which is reviewed here. Specifically, this chapter deals with the following issues: 1) it presents a brief summary of the historical origin and development of the civil religion phenomenon in America; 2) it offers an overview of the debate, controversy and disagreements sparked by Bellah's thesis, and of its most important contributors, together with an examination of the range of phenomena to which the term "civil religion" applies; 3) it surveys one of the major theoretical issues raised by the debate over civil religion in America, namely its integrative functions; 4) it summarily reviews the "voices of dissent" found in the literature; and, finally, 5) it discusses the linkage between civil religion and legitimation in the context of American society.

II.1 The Rebirth of Civil Religion [26]

The term *civil religion*, as discussed in the previous chapter, has a long European heritage, but it is the American sociologist, Robert Bellah, who is often credited with bringing the notion of civil religion to the forefront of the U.S. sociological landscape, as a result of his 1967 publication.

[26] I am referring here to civil religion in the United States. I am fully aware that civil religion in America should include civil religions ranging from Canada to Chile, i.e. the whole American continent. However, even a superficial review of the literature makes clear that when scholars argue or debate about civil religion in America, they are referring solely to the United States. For the sake of clarity, I have decided to follow the conventional usage.

This is an article which, in his own words, he has "never subsequently been allowed to forget" (Bellah, 1978:16).

The religious character of American life had captured the imagination of scholars and students of American society long before Bellah. What is now known as civil religion was "out there," so to speak, and constituted a major theme in the writings of several prominent American scholars. Forerunners of the concept are to be found in Robin Williams' *American Society: A Sociological Interpretation* (1951) with his idea of a "common religion" in America. Lloyd Warner's examination of the Memorial Day celebrations in Yankee City (1953/1974), the "common faith" of John Dewey, and Mead's "the Religion of the Republic" (1967/1974). Will Herberg (1960; 1974) spoke of "the American Way of Life," and, of course, G.K. Chesterton advanced the idea that the United States was "the only nation . . . founded on a creed" and coined the phrase "a nation with the soul of a church"(Mead, 1974:45). At the same time, several distinguished historians "such as Ralph Gabriel, Yehoshua Arieli, and Daniel Boorstin in different ways assessed the religious dimension of 'nationalism,' the 'American creed,' the 'democratic faith,' and 'culture religion'" (Jones and Richey, 1974:4). In other words, the idea of a religious "faith" in America had been discussed in academic circles, but there was no common term from which "description, analysis, and interpretation could proceed" (Jones and Richey, 1974:4; see also Hammond, 1976). These authors had noticed a religious framework in terms of which the values of American existence were expressed and understood.

The civil-religious dimension of the American experience is often traced back to a blend of ideas stemming from its Puritan tradition and from the American Enlightenment. These two antithetical traditions (Puritanism and self-seeking Utilitarianism) have been present in American

history since colonial times. America was founded on the Puritan belief that colonists had been entrusted with a special mission. It was their mission to establish a new order, "the kingdom of God, in the New World, far away from the disorders and corruptions of the Old World" (Henry, 1979:23). The self-understanding of the original colonists was derived from Judeo-Christian symbols such as "God's New Israel," "chosen people," a "covenanted" and "millennial" nation. Originating in the Puritan vision of a moral covenant between God and civil society, America was to be a community of God, for the glory of God, and subject to his judgement. It was to be a "City upon a Hill," a beacon of light and a shining example to the world (Hughey, 1992, 1983: Henry, 1979:61). From the American Enlightenment, the new settlers adopted such ideas as equality, self-determination, and the right of all Americans to *life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.* Another fundamental idea that came from the Enlightenment was the emphasis placed on the necessity of "a *virtuous* citizenry" if a democratic social order was to function properly (Hughes, 1980:77; Stauffer, 1975:392). For the colonists, a virtuous citizen was an individual imbued with a sense of moral responsibility and expected to work actively for the good of the community. Civic virtue was equated with political obligations, and political obligations with a tribute to God.

The Mayflower Compact, for example, enacted in 1620, had no constitutional standing--"it established no political institutions, nor did it enact any legislation." It served, nonetheless, as an "enabling act for the necessary laws and institutions" required for the general well-being of the community. It provided the guidelines for a righteous and divinely- approved social order. The good of the commonwealth depended "on the duty of all men in society, publicly, and at a stated season, to worship the *Supreme Being*, the great Creator and Preserver of the universe." Piety, religion, and morality were to be the crux of the civic order, a fundamental ingredient for the preservation of a

civil society entrusted with a divine mission. The Declaration of Independence merely crystalized and embodied the political "ideas and ideals" that the founding fathers of the American nation had inherited from the early settlers (Henry, 1979:71-72).

The earliest religious groups in America were "sects by definition." They existed from the beginning in a pluralistic setting where there was no established church (Rice, 1980:57). As a result of the sectarian character of the nonconformist, persecuted, and transplanted churches of Europe, Puritanism played a pivotal role in legitimizing religious pluralism. It provided a "theological rationale" for ending any sort of religious monopoly. But Puritanism did more than this. It forced "onto society's agenda the item of pluralism, the question of 'religious liberty,' the separation of church and state . . . " (Hammond, 1974:124).

These ideas became embodied in the Constitution. The first clause of the first amendment states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." And its second clause reads "or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The Constitution, therefore, prohibits "a religious establishment," but at the same time it confirms and protects the free practice of religion. This freedom *in* religion, which started early in the history of the American nation, was the real intention of the founders of the republic (Bellah, 1980b:7). Under religious freedom the new nation assumed the traditional function "of the church." Because no church religion could monopolize the ethical and moral beliefs of the nation, a different religion came to fill this void, emerging in its early beginnings as a belief-system independent of both church and state (Mead, 1974:66).

This early civic-religion was never intended to be a cult directed and controlled by the government. Rather, it was left to each individual to worship God according to his own conscience and beliefs. But it was an "American conviction," Henry notes, that the "good Christian is the good

citizen" (Henry, 1979:72). Hence, from its earliest beginnings as a nation, Americans did not have to have their loyalties divided (or so their ideology suggested). They did not have to suffer the conflict and tension between religious beliefs and civic responsibility and virtue that Rousseau feared. In the Puritan tradition a "'God-fearing' person was by definition a law-abiding person as well" (Hughey, 1984:119). Americans could be good Christians and good citizens at the same time, for ultimately, "'Christian' and 'citizen' were two ways of saying the same thing." Early settlers were convinced that they were in the possession of truth. There was also a religious necessity of making this truth known to the world. This conviction has been an important element for the religious self-understanding of Americans (Demerath and Williams, 1989:35).

Bellah, to a certain extent, recaptured these old arguments, gave them a new and contemporary outlook (by referring not only to the founding fathers but to living presidents as well), and provided a common term for this national faith-- *American civil religion.* Most important, perhaps, was his insistence that "this religion--or perhaps better, this religion dimension--has its own seriousness and integrity and requires the same care in understanding that any other religion does" (Bellah, 1967:1).

Bellah starts with a recognition that "the words and acts of the founding fathers . . . shaped the form and tone of the civil religion," and that this tone, religious in nature, has been maintained ever since. Using evidence from inaugural addresses from Franklin, Washington, Jefferson, to more modern leaders such as Kennedy and Johnson, Bellah argues that civil religion in America: 1) provides a religious legitimation to political authority; 2) gives the political process a "transcendent goal"; and 3) gives Americans a "higher criterion" in terms of which the nation can be judged.

Bellah argues that the "words and acts" of the founding fathers, and those of most American Presidents, acknowledge a higher criterion for sovereignty than either state, people or nation. Namely, a "non-sectarian" God which most Americans "can accept" although not necessarily agree on its meaning (Bellah, 1967:7). The written words of American statesmen, politicians and religious leaders, Bellah points out, almost "invariably" place the nation in a direct relationship with God, whether asking for its guidance or calling the nation to uphold its founding values (Demerath and Williams, 1985:158). The God Americans invoke, he notes, is "related to order, law, and right," and it is "actively interested and involved" in American history. In short, Bellah claims that the whole American political process, since the earliest days of the republic, has been rooted in biblical religious symbols, and has been imbued with a transcendental quality (Bellah, 1967:7-8).

Bellah is aware that what political officials say on solemn events "need not be taken at face value." Nonetheless, he argues that those words often express "deep-seated values and commitments." So, while to the "cynical" mind, a semblance of piety or the mentioning of God during inaugural addresses or presidential campaigns, might be interpreted as no more than a strategy to win votes, Bellah insists that what people say on public and solemn occasions need not be dismissed as unimportant. On the contrary, it deserves serious attention and its own special analysis. Solemn public addresses express a sense of value and purpose not explicit in everyday life. They provide an essential clue to understand the religious character of American political life (1967:2).[27]

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[27] Bellah uses several examples to prove his point. Perhaps, the most telling is the quote from Kennedy's inaugural address: "the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God...Let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own" (1967:1-2).

Bellah rightly argues that due to the separation of church and state, religion in America is considered to be a strictly private affair. But he notes that this separation has not resulted in a political realm "denied" of a religious dimension. On the contrary, the American political tradition has always been rooted in biblical religious symbols. He argues, in fact, that a number of common religious elements have played a crucial role in the development of American institutions and political life. This "public religious dimension" expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols and rituals, is what he calls the *American civil religion* (Bellah, 1967:3-4).

Bellah assumes a widespread consensus regarding some religious-political tenets concerning the nation's history and destiny. He claims that biblical religion and utilitarian individualism have been the "most successful" interpreters of American reality, "providing meaning and generating loyalty."[28] However, despite the fact that both traditions have been part of the American heritage since the dawn of the nation, Bellah believes that the "original conception" of America was fundamentally religious and moral, not liberal and utilitarian (Bellah, 1975:xiv). What shaped American national self-understanding in the earliest days, was the notion of American society as a nation "under God" or as "God's new Israel." The biblical tradition, "strongly social and collective," stressed communitarian ideals, charity for all members, and public and private virtue. Utilitarian individualism, while somehow at odds with the biblical tradition, also became part of the American creed very early in its history. It became popular principally through the writings of John Locke, whose version of utilitarianism was "softer" and "deliberately designed to obscure the

[28] One might see Mormonism as a good example of this--as a people possessed with a covenant and America, as a land literally visited by Jesus Christ. Joseph Smith, a farm-boy turned prophet and the founder of the Mormon church in 1830, taught that "the New Jerusalem was here, smack dab in the middle of America" (Time, August 4, 1997:38. See in this same issue pages 31 to 37).

contrast with biblical religion" (Bellah, 1980c:168-169). In the biblical tradition the individual is assumed to be motivated by his/her "conscience," while in the utilitarian tradition by his/her "interest." The severity of this contrast, Bellah argues, was "obscured," but never totally "obliterated." Bellah claims that the marriage ("harmonization") of these two traditions was possible only after religion had been, so to speak, "corrupted" by utilitarian individualism. That is, when religion itself "became for many a means for the maximization of self-interest with no effective link to virtue, charity or community" (Bellah, 1980c:169-170).[29]

Bellah argues that American civil religion "borrowed selectively" from both the Puritan and secular enlightenment tradition in such a way

> . . . that the average American saw no conflict between the two. In this way, [it] was able to build up without any bitter struggle with the church powerful symbols of national solidarity and to mobilize deep levels of personal motivation for the attainment of national goals (Bellah, 1967:13).

Since Bellah's publication, the concept of civil religion has become one of the most widely used ideas in the sociology of religion. As mentioned in the Introduction, Bellah's seminal study generated an avalanche of articles and debates among scholars interested in the relationship between religion and politics in the context of American society (Bellah, 1968, 1970, 1973; Cutler, 1968; Coleman, 1969; Cherry, 1970; 1971; Herbert, 1973; Richey et al., 1974, 1980; Fenn, 1972, 1976; Hammond, 1976, Marty, 1974; Martin, 1978; Wilson, 1979; Gehrig, 1981a, 1981b; Anthony and

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[29] A modern expression of this "corruption" is to be found in the kind of "purely private pietism," which emerged during the nineteenth century, emphasizing only individual reward. Bellah even interprets fundamentalism in America, not necessarily as an "expression of backward yokels," but rather as a strong reaction against the utilitarian ethos of modern America, by the heirs of the biblical tradition that remained "uncorrupted" or "only minimally" so (1980c:171).

Robbins, 1982; Toolin, 1983; Demerath and Williams, 1985; Adams, 1987, to name just a few).[30] Bellah's essay, which even he recognizes roused "passionate opposition" as well as "widespread acceptance" (Bellah, 1978:16), was to become one of the most acclaimed and controversial publications in the history of sociology of religion, and perhaps, of American sociology. Some authors have gone so far as to consider Bellah's civil religion thesis "one of the most prodigious ideas to come from the social sciences" (Hadden et al., 1975:386). Indeed, it has been widely used in other fields, such as political science, history, and political philosophy. However, discussions of civil religion have been largely shaped by a distinctive American focus. In fact, as Cristi and Dawson have noted, the controversy, interest, and debate generated among sociologists "has been essentially by Americans, about America, and for Americans" (1996:320).

Although the debate is wide-ranging, the most prominent issues found in the controversy sparked by Bellah's views are: 1) definitional disagreements; 2) arguments about the very existence of civil religion in American society, as an empirical phenomenon; and 3) the 'functions,' if any, played by civil religion in society (Gehrig, 1981b:1). But discussions have also centered around different types of civil religion, on the structural differentiation of civil religion from other institutions, and on the relationship between civil religion and denominational religions.

By the late 1980s there was a gradual decline of the American civil religion debate, but this by no means meant its disappearance from the sociological scene (Mathisen, 1989). On the contrary,

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[30] For an excellent bibliographic review of the American civil religion literature see "Twenty Years After Bellah: Whatever Happened to American Civil Religion?" James A. Mathisen (1980); Hammond's "The sociology of American civil religion: A bibliographic essay" (1976), and also "Civil Religion in America: A Bibliography," compiled by Boardman Kathan and Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer (1975). For more recent articles and books dealing with the subject, see Mitchell (1995); Caplow (1994); Casanova (1994); Giner (1993); Kim (1993); Gamoran (1990); O'Toole (1984); Hughey (1983).

Hammond (1980d:200) noted that an issue which at first roused "more heat than light" had gone on to become a serious item on research agendas surviving "quarrels over its utility as a concept--even its existence as a phenomenon" to become a major topic of monographs and academic journals. Today, thirty years after Bellah's publication, the interest generated by civil religion in America remains very much alive. In fact, a neophyte to this subject would be surprised to find how many books on social and political theory and, of course, on the sociology of religion, include in their indexes the concept of civil religion.[31]

In the following section I will outline some of the major components of the definitional disagreement, discuss some of the different models of civil religion present in the literature, and give some examples of the wide range of social phenomena that are now included under the category "civil religion."

II.2 Disagreements and Debates

The definitional debate commenced almost as soon as Bellah introduced the term "civil religion" into the sociological scene. As Gehrig has commented, scholars from different disciplines have expressed interest in civil religion, but define it in quite different ways (1981b:viii). Indeed the vast literature on civil religion indicates that the term not only has a variety of meanings, but also a multiplicity of names. Gehrig argues that the definitional problem is due, in part, to the "coexistence" of a variety of interconnected but different models of American civil religion. By this she means the different approaches taken by historians, theologians, political scientists, philosophers,

[31] See, for example, *Political Thinking, Political Theory and Civil Society* by Steven M. DeLue (1997), *Producing the Sacred* by Robert Wuthnow (1994), and *The Moral Commonwealth* by Phillip Selznick (1992).

or sociologists interested in this issue. Not surprisingly, this conceptual diversity has made any agreement on the topic extremely difficult (Gehrig, 1981b:17-18. See also West, 1980:23, and Wilson, 1979:148).

According to Bellah, the essence of civil religion is the "religio-political problem" (i.e., the relationship between religion and politics, or the religious link between citizens and the state). Bellah (1975:3) defines civil religion as "that religious dimension found, I think, in the life of every people, through which it interprets its historical experience in the light of a transcendent reality." In Bellah's words, American civil religion is a "genuine apprehension of universal and transcendent religious reality as seen in, or revealed through, the experience of the American people" (Bellah, 1975:154). It represents the institutionalization of "sacred beliefs" about the American nation, which provides Americans with a sense of cohesion and solidarity especially in times of profound national crises (Bellah, 1974:29). In the context of American society Bellah mentions three such crises: the War of Independence, the Civil War, and the post-1945 period, especially the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Bellah believes that American national self-understanding was so deeply shaken by each of these events "as to require expression in the civil religion." All three events provided the "tone" and themes of the civil religious discourse in America (Bellah, 1967:9).

Bellah points out that although the church and state are separate in the United States, the political realm still has a "strong religious dimension." This religious dimension is not a substitute for denominational religions. Rather, it "runs parallel to, and sometimes finds expression through formal religion" (Toolin, 1983:39). Bellah further argues that American civil religion is a "securely institutionalized" religion, with its own set of sacred symbols grounded in the Christian tradition. These symbols, though Christian in origin, do not stand for any God, or any church, in particular.

Rather, they are "uniquely American, transcending denominational or religious differences" (Demerath and Williams, 1985:157).

Civil religion "narrowly conceived," Robert Wuthnow comments, "is the use of God language with reference to the nation" (Wuthnow, 1994:130). Most scholars, however, make use of less minimalist definitions. More broadly conceived, one encounters a number of definitions and typologies in the literature. Civil religion has been defined as a form of "Protestant civic piety" to be found in the fusion of American Protestantism and a highly utilitarian secular ideology (Michaelson, 1970; Wuthnow, 1988:244). Or, it has been described as a "set of beliefs and rituals, related to the past, present and/or future of a people (nation) which are understood in some transcendental fashion" (Hammond, 1976:171).

Consistent with Bellah's views, Coleman defines American civil religion as "a special case of the religious symbol system, designed to perform a differentiated function which is the unique province of neither church nor state" (1969:69). He proposes what he thinks is a universal typology of civil religions, distinguishing three forms which would parallel the general evolution of religion itself: 1) undifferentiated civil religions, either church or state-sponsored, which he finds in virtually all traditional cultures, and in Buddhism and Shinto Japan; 2) secular nationalism, of which the ex-Soviet Russia would be an example, and 3) civil religion differentiated from both church and state.[32]

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[32] Coleman's typology follows a model previously advanced by David Apter in his article "Political Religions in the New States" (1963:57-104). Apter distinguishes three types of "political religions": 1) theocratic systems characteristic of virtually all pre-modern societies; 2) reconciliation systems, typical of modern Western society where religion and state are separated, where "secular ends can never become sacred," and where there is individual liberty, religious tolerance and political freedom; 3) mobilization systems or "political religions" which represent an alternative to the two other models. These types would roughly correspond with the process of modernization. Both Apter and Coleman fail to realize that even in modern Western society "secular ends" may become, and do become sacralized. This issue will re-emerge in Chapter Four.

The American case is, in his view, the most pristine example of a civil religion fully differentiated from both the church and the state.

Martin Marty, following the Weberian tradition, notes two dimensions of American civil religion: "priestly" and "prophetic." The former "comforts the afflicted," the latter "afflicts the comfortable" (Marty, 1974:145). Where the priestly mode of civil religion "is celebratory, affirmative and culture-binding, the prophetic mode is challenging and judgmental" (Ungar, 1991:505). Ungar makes a distinction between "ceremonial" versus "dynamic" models of civil religion.[33] The ceremonial character of civil religion is to be found in presidential addresses, Fourth of July celebrations, Memorial Day ceremonies, etc. The dynamic dimension, by contrast, approaches the issue from "an historical" point of view, placing less emphasis on ritual elements (Ungar, 1991:504).

John Wilson (1974:117) has argued that civil religion has become a "generic category" which covers under its umbrella several rather different concepts or models. He examines three models implicitly found in the literature, so as to assess their usefulness for historical research: a "theological," a "ceremonial" and a "structural-functional." The theological model is concerned with what has been called "American faith," "public piety," or the "religion of the Republic." It refers to a particular national 'faith' based on universal Christian values. The "ceremonial-ritual" model, as its name implies, deals with the social role of symbolic and cultic behavior in society. It is concerned with the issue of how symbolic behavior provides cultural unity regardless of ethnic, class, or religious differentiation. One example would be Memorial Day ceremonies, which

[33] This parallels Durkheim's idea that religion is not only a "system of practice" (such as feasts, rites, cultic celebrations), but also a "system of ideas" whose object is to explain the world. The one is turned towards "action" the other is turned towards the "thought" necessary to organize the group (Durkheim, 1912/1961a:476).

allegedly integrate diverse groups into a 'sacred unity.' The structural-functional model is concerned with civil religion as a "particular religion" within American society. This model, according to Wilson, is the most "encompassing and sophisticated" version of civil religion, and is best exemplified by Bellah's analysis. It has a "symbolic content" (i.e., images of the American nation fulfilling God's will on earth). It includes a series of "religious figures," such as Washington, Lincoln, Roosevelt or Kennedy. It makes use of historic events imbued with a sacred significance (e.g., the revolutionary struggle, the triumph of American liberal democracy over the decadent aristocratic forces of European nations). It has its own "sacred places" such as "Hallowed ground at Gettysburg [and] Washington a sacred mecca," and its own rituals (e.g., solemn celebrations such as the Fourth of July). This model, Wilson maintains, is not only more complex and sophisticated, but "successfully" differentiates the "*particular kinds* of symbolic behavior and belief centered on the national polity" (Wilson, 1974:129). Considered strictly in theoretical terms, Wilson argues, this model would suit best the historian interested in this issue. Wilson accepts Bellah's model but questions his claim that there is in America an "institutionalized, well-developed, and differentiated civil religion" (Wilson, 1974:137). In his view, civil religion is an episodic reality, or a reality with an "episodic existence" (Jones and Richey, 1974:3).

In a different publication, Wilson (1979:150-168) proposes not three but four different constructions of "public religion" in America, to help clarify the different meanings of the term in the existing literature: a "social," "cultural," "political" and "theological" model. This time he uses a "religious referent." That is, Wilson's emphasis is on the "manifest religious content" of civil religion, rather than, for example, on "institutional or behavioral issues," which, according to him, are more "explicitly political" (Wilson, 1979:150). The fact that he uses a religious referent, does

not make civil religion less political, or less in tune with behavioral issues. Certainly, "behavioral" issues are implicit in the first two models. Otherwise, it is difficult to accept Wilson's own claim that the central analytical focus of the cultural model is the "symbolic unity" of the collectivity as expressed "in and through the action-guiding provisions which define the culture." If the cultural model centers on "patterns of behavior common to the culture," how can it not have a manifest behavioral content? Moreover, insofar as the political and theological models are concerned with the political order, both are either "explicitly" or implicitly political. In any case, Wilson's interest is in the religious element of civil religion. He wants to analyze "religious modes of representations," or how "religiousness" is expressed in the different models proposed. His concern has little to do with the political significance of civil religion.

Hence, all four models proposed by Wilson try to identify how "sacredness" is used and understood. The social and cultural models are Durkheimian in orientation. The former points to the "sacredness" and symbolic unity of society (society itself is represented as sacred), while the latter, to its "ritual elements and symbol systems." Sacrality in this case is not attributed to society *per se*, "for what counts as the object of religion is the culture" (Wilson, 1979:151). The central elements of the social model are rituals, and cultural beliefs and/or behaviors considered sacred by groups or even institutions concerned with civil society. In the cultural model, by contrast, explicit rituals and beliefs are not so important *per se*. They are interpreted less as the "expression" of social unity, and more as "evidence" for shared values. Finally, the political and theological models, as mentioned above, are concerned with the political order, although in slightly different terms. The political model neither sacralizes society nor does it endow culture with "religious significance." Instead, the political order itself is sacralized, and is "identified as requiring fundamental

commitment and deserving final loyalty." The theological model refers to a transcendent authority or "norm acting upon the political order, the general culture, and even the society . . . " (Wilson, 1979:151). In my view, both are 'political religions,' insofar as their primary role is to strengthen the state or legitimize a particular political order. Such being the case, they are civil religions in Rousseau's meaning of the term, although Wilson calls them "public religion."

Other scholars have not tried to explain or define models, but instead have attempted to identify different institutional sources of civil religiosity. Cole and Hammond (1974:177), for example, believe that in the absence of a "universally acceptable meaning system" found in traditional religion, the legal system may become a "universally acceptable substitute." That is, they believe that the legal system is slowly being elevated to a civil religion status, and will likely become the "new moral architecture" of the American nation. Hammond notes that since early on in American history the Supreme Court has evoked a religious "breath of respect" that no other church has. Supreme Court justices have been called "the nine high priests." The law has played a critical role in civil religion's development in America (1980c:141). Hammond suggests that the law "might be perceived as having sacred functions, especially in establishing acceptable behavior within the society" (Wilson, 1979:130). Because the courts in America "interpret" the law, and "identify" duties, obligations, and aspirations, moral issues have the tendency to be transformed into legal issues. The "religious balloon strings," Hammond writes, "being no longer the property of the church only, could be grasped by anybody, including (perhaps especially) judges" (1980a:76).[34]

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[34] Although to a large extent Hammond is correct, his suggestion needs to be qualified. One should remember the attacks on the Supreme Court as being *unelected* and so failing one of the primary requirements of legitimacy. One should also consider the various impeachment efforts that have resulted as a consequence of this situation. Moreover,

Still others have seen in competitive American sport strong elements of civil religion. Wilson has noted that its focus upon success, money, power, and technical expertise, capture in a "direct" and dramatic way the content of the American culture as it has developed in the twentieth century (Wilson, 1979:135). Professional sports, at a deeper level of analysis, are "cultural rites" and collective gatherings of immense social significance (Wilson; 1974:125).[35]

In other words, the range of social phenomena to which the term "civil religion" applies seems to be constantly expanding and changing. Some scholars have argued that it also seems, at times, "to be growing more obscure with each new essay" (Markoff and Regan, 1982:333).

Bellah himself seems to be the most surprised and frustrated by the controversy, elaboration, and, perhaps, confusion of the concept that has resulted from his 1967 article. In fact, he has spent a good deal of his intellectual career trying to clarify what he means by civil religion (Bellah, 1968; 1970; 1973; 1974; 1975; 1976; 1980). A year after Bellah's original publication, his article was reprinted together with several "commentaries" by various scholars (Cutler, 1968:365-88). "It is clear," Bellah noted at the time, that what he meant by civil religion in America "is not exactly what most of the commentators mean, nor do they agree one with another" (Bellah, 1968:388). More than a decade later he seemed puzzled by the fact that opposition to his suggestion of a civil religion in

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as Wilson rightly notes, the case law tradition, characteristic of the American system, does not derive political rights from natural rights, so that "the law is far less sacrosanct than in a natural rights formulation, and the jurists far less remote and god-like" (1979130). However, legal institutions do provide "structural support" for civil religion by defining and setting "limits" beyond which particular patterns of behavior will not be permitted in America. That is, the law establishes a "range of life styles appropriate to and acceptable in the American culture" (Wilson, 1979:131-132). I am indebted to Dr. Ron Lambert for his helpful comments regarding this issue.

[35]See Cornish, Rogers (1972) as an example of the attempt to link organized sport with civil religion in America. Also, Hammond (1976:177). "It is not unreasonable," Hammond notes, to see the educational system "a training ground for citizenship" doubling as "a playing field for competition" and thus flavouring "that citizenship." Novak (1992:243) has noted that professional football is the most "accessible public liturgy of the nation's...self-consciousness." See also *The Joy of Sports* (1976) where Novak examines the theological dimension of sports in American life.

America had shown "little unity," and even more baffled by the fact that those who supported his thesis were "in even greater disarray." Bellah writes,

> Some of my opponents say there is no such thing, that I have invented something which does not exist; others say there is such a thing but there ought not to be: still others say there is such a thing but it should be called by another name, "public piety," for example, rather than civil religion (Bellah, 1978:16).

As for those who supported his idea, Bellah complains they have "spread" the term civil religion "far beyond any coherent concept," or at least "far beyond anything" he ever intended by it (Bellah, 1978:16). So, plagued by definitional problems and the "unnecessary reification" given to the term, Bellah has sought to distance himself from 'civil religion.' In the late 1980s he declared a moratorium on the use of the term as he "grew tired" of debating and explaining that civil religion was not the "idolatrous worship of the state." He also grew "weary" of the whole definitional debate. He was interested, he declared, "in the substantive issues, not in definitions" (1989:147).[36]

In 1974 Bellah delivered a talk at the Drew University consultation on civil religion which was later published as *American Civil Religion in the 1970s*. In the aftermath of the conference some authors speculated that even Bellah himself was, perhaps, calling into question the existence of civil religion in America. Bellah had remarked that "'civil religion' as an interpretive schema came into existence in 1967." This was taken to mean that he had "doubts" as to the "existence of that which

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[36] In *Habits of the Heart* (1985) Bellah does not make any reference to civil religion. By this time, he had stopped writing about it, and did not even bother to answer some of the critiques still sparked by his ideas on American civil religion (Mathisen, 1989:137). Bellah himself acknowledges that although *Habits* deals with the "same substantive issues" as his other writings on civil religion, he is pleased to have dropped the term. He observes that his decision has "spared" him the often "irrelevant" disputes and arguments about civil religion "customarily engendered" by his previous publications (Bellah, 1989:147). For further discussions on the definitional debate see Cutler (1968); Cherry (1971); Richey and Jones (1974); Marty (1974); Hammond (1976) and Gehrig (1981).

that schema set out to interpret." Bellah complained that he had been largely misunderstood and "misinterpreted." He responded to the panel on civil religion, by "returning once more to the question of whether civil religion exists 'out there' so to speak." He assured his critics that he had never had the slightest doubt that what he "was describing and interpreting existed," even if "public opinion questionnaires" could not prove its existence (Bellah, 1976:153-159).[37] But, there are still some scholars "out there" who doubt that civil religion in America "exists as an objective social fact" (i.e., as an empirical phenomena). Others recognize its utility as a sociological concept, but disagree on appropriate indicators or measurement techniques (Gehrig, 1981b:viii).[38]

In spite of the definitional polemic and the proliferation of typologies, a survey of the literature reveals several recurrent elements present in most discussions (Cristi and Dawson, 1996:321). Some of them have already been noted, but I will briefly summarize them again. American civil religion is generally conceived as a belief system that draws upon the religious ideologies and common historical experiences of the American people. It is believed to form a frame of reference, or to use Wilson's words (1979:94) "frameworks of intelligibility," through which

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[37] On this issue Novak (1992:127) writes, civil religion is not "some lowest common denominator, of all the beliefs of all our citizens. It is not discovered by taking an opinion poll. It is discovered by analyzing experiences, interpretations, and institutions of our national life."

[38] But a few empirical studies (using questionnaires and sample surveys) have proven its existence. Wimberley et al. (1976:890) conducted a series of surveys specifically designed to test Bellah's thesis at the level of individual beliefs. In their 1976 article, they concluded that civil religion is found to exist "empirically" in America. Their study indicates that civil religion is, or emerges as a "distinct factor," separate from other types of religious commitments. In 1981, Wimberly and Christenson explored the issue of civil religion as an indicator of policy preference. They concluded that civil religion appeared to be a "significant but fairly ineffective" indicator of differences in matters of public policy. In an earlier study, Wimberley (1980) found civil religion to be more effective as an indicator of support for presidential candidates--allegiances to civil religious commitments seemed to correspond with a "conservative profile." In a separate study (Christenson and Wimberley, 1978) it was found that while civil religious allegiances and commitments had "no relationship to whether people voted, the 'civil religious' were slightly inclined toward Democratic party membership and conservative political identities." See also Christenson and Wimberley (1978); Jolicoeur and Knowles (1978); Thomas and Flipppen (1972); Cole and Hammond (1974).

Americans understand, interpret and give meaning to their existence (Anthony and Robbins, 1982:216; Streiker and Strobes, 1972:174; Toolin, 1983:39). That is, it does function, or at least it did function for long periods of time, as a religious symbol system which relates America and its citizens to the conditions of ultimate existence. It is said to be structurally and functionally differentiated from both the political order and the religious order (Cristi and Dawson, 1996:321, see also Gehrig, 1981; Wimberley et al., 1976; Coleman, 1970). Values such as "freedom," "democracy," "justice," "charity," are said to be imbued with a sacred dimension. It is assumed that the quasi-religious reverence attached to these values has provided Americans (both early settlers and contemporary ones) with a sense of a common destiny and unique mission (Sheikes and Strobes, 1972:174; Gehrig, 1981b:53). It is institutionally "*carried* by the public system of education, the judiciary, the presidency and other political institutions" (Cristi and Dawson, 1996:321). The public school system, in particular, is seen as the most important institution "in and through which civil religion has continuous cultural presence in American life" (Hammond, 1968:385). It plays a key role in producing, transmitting, and maintaining American civil religion by "absorbing and then converting" each new wave of immigrants into "believers" of the American creed (Hammond, 1976:177; see also Hammond, 1980a:72 and 1980c:161; Gamoran, 1990:235; Michaelson, 1970; 1971). As Bellah himself acknowledges, public schools provide the most important *milieu* for the "cultic celebration of civil rituals" (1967:14).

Now, the debate over the presence or absence of civil religion in America has certainly been less controversial than the definitional dispute. Bellah marvels "why something so obvious" (its existence in American society) "should have escaped serious analytical attention." He considers this

oversight, in itself, an "interesting problem."[39] The reason, he argues, is to be found in the fact that the Durkheimian notion that every society has a "religious dimension" was never taken seriously by Americans or was "foreign" to them (a notion, he notes, that would have surprised no one in Asia, for example). In his opinion, this has obscured the "recognition of such [a] dimension" within American society (Bellah, 1967:19).

Bellah seems to imply that because "every group has a religious dimension," the existence of civil religion is inevitable at the national level, and inevitably part of the national consciousness. As Richardson notes (1974:166), it is not difficult to accept the fact that every group generates "symbols and collective rituals" which help forge group identity, and which guide and hold the group together. These symbols and rituals are "the 'religion' of the group." In Durkheimian terms, they constitute the "collective ideals" which religion expresses, and which make the "unity" and the "personality" of the group (Durkheim, 1912/1961:474-475). So, broadly speaking, one may say that any civil group will generate its own symbols and rituals and, perhaps, its own civil religion.[40] What is less readily accepted, however, and certainly more controversial, is the idea that "every civil group will be the unity of both a nation and a state, or that every civil religion will be a *national civil religion*." Richardson rightly differentiates the "nation" (a cultural element) from the "state" (a political unit). If nations and states are "distinguishable social entities," it follows that they can produce "not simply different, but even opposed, religions" (Richardson: 1974: 167).

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[39] As mentioned before, the idea of a civic-religious phenomenon antedates Bellah's notion of civil religion--it had not really "escaped" the attention of other scholars.

[40] A civil group is understood here as any group active at the level of civil society. For example, one could mention groups ranging from environmentalists, to Boy Scouts, to voluntary associations. At an international level, one could place organizations such as Doctors Without Frontiers, PEN International, Amnesty International, etc.

Richardson notes that if one takes a Durkheimian stance, as Bellah does, there can be no serious "disagreement with Bellah's sociological descriptions" of American civil religion. However, what becomes problematic is his conception of a "civic group" and his claim that American civil religion is "an inevitable social structure" that unites all Americans in one common faith (Richardson, 1974:166). Indeed, Bellah's thesis implies that "the group" is the American nation, which, in turn, is conceived as an homogeneous entity, if not devoid of serious conflicts and tensions, at least able to neutralize them through a civic faith. More strongly stated, Bellah's analysis of civil religion "implies the image of a national village, transcending all religious, racial, and class differences" (Hughey, 1983:67). The history of this American 'village,' as Bellah himself acknowledges, has often been presented as a great "success story," perhaps because Americans are "compulsively afraid of defeat" and have opted to "remove negative thinking" from their 'collective conscience' (Bellah, 1975:148).

Bellah fails to realize that he, not as a historian but as a sociologist, is also part of the problem. He is aware that the story of America is a "somber one, filled with great achievements and great crimes" (1975:xv). Despite this recognition, his vision of American civil religion is certainly a "success story": American society as a whole, united under a common and "sacred" canopy, sharing common values, common beliefs, and a common destiny. However, the history of American society is not the story of one America, "its travels and travails," but rather the story of different groups competing to define what the nation should be, what "morality should prevail," what groups should be excluded, and what symbols and rituals should be preserved and taught to future generations. American civil religion, in fact, "does not speak with a single voice," but rather with

many different tongues. It speaks from "different traditions" and offers "different visions" of what America can and should be (Hughey, 1983:69).

In short, what is particularly troubling in Bellah's theory is the fact that he does not sharply distinguish between various groups. He has the tendency to "lump together" as if they were one homogeneous group "'people,' 'nation,' the 'civil,' or 'political order'" (Richardson, 1974:167). According to Richardson, this produces a shift in his argument from a valid assumption to an invalid one: "from the valid assumption that every civil group inevitably generates a civil religion to the invalid assumption that a civil group is a nation state" (Richardson, 1974:167).[41] What becomes problematic, Richardson proposes, is not Bellah's conception of civil religion, but the social cohesion he attributes to it, and his understanding of "civic groups." Indeed, Bellah conceives civil religion as essentially integrative; it is just that in certain circumstances it is inhibited from performing its role. This equation of civil religion with "integration" has tended to dominate most discussions of American civil religion.

II.3 Civil Religion as a Source of Integration

Because the American civil religion debate has its roots in, or is clearly associated with the Durkheimian functionalist approach, most authors are eager to identify the functional importance

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[41] Bellah certainly believes that "all politically organized societies have some sort of civil religion" (Bellah, 1974:257). Regan, by contrast, contends that not every modern nation "has or needs" one (Regan, 1976:105). Hammond (1976:179), who in 1976 claimed that "civil religions are found where they are sought," retracted this view some years later. He "sought" but could not "find" a civil religion in Mexico (Hammond, 1980a). In another article, published the same year, Hammond reiterated this view by admitting that "not every nation-state has a civil religion" (Hammond, 1980b). Hammond concluded that Mexico does not have a civil religion, primarily because he could not find an 'American civil religion' in Mexico. However, from a reading of his own article, one can easily ascertain that Mexico has a different kind of civil religion--one that has been identified by Coleman (1969) as 'secular nationalism.' See Chapter Five.

of civil religion. If we look at those 'functions' that civil religion allegedly performs for society, two claims are most commonly acknowledged, and accepted, in the literature: its integrative function, and its legitimating function. Both functions are conceived as important indicators of civil religion's importance to society (Gehrig, 1981a:56; Purdy, 1982:307).

Clearly, the roots of the integrative (and/or divisive force) of civil religion can be traced back to the very genesis of the concept itself. The consensus model of civil religion (fostering social integration) is linked to Durkheim's concern with societal order and harmony, especially to his ideas on religion as expressed in the *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1961a). However, one must be careful to distinguish between spontaneous integration (the Durkheimian approach) and forced integration (the Rousseauan one, which is more likely to produce conflict and division). In the latter case an integrative national civic faith is to be dictated, fostered, and imposed "from the top down as an artificial source of civic virtue" (Demerath and Williams, 1985:156). Furthermore, we may distinguish two distinct senses of the term 'integration.' Integration may involve the "resolution of conflicts" through persuasion and compromise, or it may entail coercion, manipulation, and even the use of force (Hamilton, 1995:120). One should also consider degrees and shades of integration. The question to be asked is, who are integrated and by what methods? For integration may work only with reference to certain groups and not others. This means that integration may be very effective at one level (for instance the power elites), without necessarily uniting other groups (the masses or certain minority groups).[42]

[42] See the argument advanced by Abercrombie et al. in *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (1980). The authors argue that a dominant ideology is more likely to bind together the dominant class itself, rather than integrate or incorporate the subordinate classes into the existing social system.

A survey of the literature reveals that whereas the definitional issue has been the subject of heated polarization, a high degree of consensus exists regarding civil religion's integrative role. Most authors share the idea that civil religion is an important factor in "nation building." It allegedly provides Americans with a sense of national identity and national solidarity, uniting them in a 'moral community.' Its essential 'function' is to build, affirm, and celebrate a common national heritage (Kim, 1993; McGuire, 1987; Coleman, 1969; Bellah, 1967). There is also agreement that civil religion is a kind of religious bridge between citizen and nation. As such, it is conceived as a mobilizing force towards the attainment of national aspirations. In short, American civil religion is said to promote national unity, sustain commitment toward national goals, and celebrate the American culture and "way of life" (Kim, 1993:259; Coleman, 1970:76; Fairbanks, 1981:216; McGuire, 1987:161; Toolin, 1989:39; 1983:47).

Simply put, there is a widespread belief that a civil religion, *Americanism*, imparts a religious significance to the whole fabric of American life. Novak writes: "Americans treat America as a religion," so "being American is a state of soul" (Novak, 1992:xxix; 45). Leon Samson, in a similar vein, claims that "Americanism" is to the American people "not a tradition or a territory . . . but a doctrine . . . " (in Huntington, 1981:25). This doctrine, this American "creed"--*American civil religion*--it is claimed, unites all Americans under a common faith.

In reviewing the literature one is struck by the high degree of consensus found on this issue. But, at the same time, one soon realizes that this should not be so surprising after all-- Durkheim has exercised an enormous influence on students of civil religion. As a result, a significant number of scholars have taken as a matter of faith the alleged integrative function of civil religion. Authors such as Coleman (1970:76), for example, believe that "by definition" civil religion acts as an

integrative force in society. Demerath and Hammond (1967:205) note that civil religion "may be one of several structural arrangements" available for the integration of modern society. In their opinion, religious organizations in America have proven unable to provide moral integration. This has had, perhaps, the unintended consequence of strengthening the potentially integrative force of civil religion (Gehrig, 1981b:33). Hammond has argued that religious pluralism, by not allowing any particular religion to monopolize the religious symbol system, has generated a "need" for some universal meaning system. He sees in this "need" the real source and origin of the civil religion phenomena (Hammond, 1980:122; Cole and Hammond 1974:177). In other words, civil religion has come to fill the void, providing the kind "of overarching moral glue which fragmented religious symbolism" has been unable to offer (Markoff and Regan, 1982:343).

Bellah himself believes that civil religion provides integration particularly in times of national crises. His analysis rests on the Durkheimian supposition that integration is based upon a "common moral understanding." It is this common understanding, "assumed to be grounded on a religious symbol system," which helps to explain, give meaning, and ultimately legitimize American society (Gehrig, 1981a:57). While it is true that Bellah stresses the integrative force of civil religion, it is also true that he has recognized, at times, that civil religion has not always properly performed its role. That is, he has recognized that civil religion may divide people as well.

To be sure, perhaps because integration is at the heart of Bellah's thought, in some of his writings he takes a 'prophetic' role and sounds an alarm bell against the forces of disruption. In *The Broken Covenant* (1975:163) he warns that the integrative role of American civil religion may not always be fulfilled. Disillusioned, he writes, "today, the American civil religion is an empty and broken shell." He also acknowledges that not only in the present but possibly throughout American

history, the "tenets of civil religion" have not always led to integration. Speaking of the American Revolution and the Civil War, he notes that "commitment" to the dogmas of civil religion "led not to 'social integration' but to war and the near destruction of the nation" (Bellah, 1976:154). He voices a similar concern again regarding the Vietnam war which shattered the tenets of faith of the American people, creating civil disharmony and promoting cultural confusion rather than social cohesion. However, while on occasions Bellah takes a critical stance and recognizes civil religion's capacity for both integration and separation, harmony and conflict, his analysis and interpretation of American civil religion essentially imply integration and social cohesion.

Gehrig argues that, on the issue of integration, Bellah takes a "middle position" leaving the question of the integrative power of civil religion "open." In her view, Bellah's position allows for both integration and division (Gehrig, 1981:57). Mathisen (1989:139) argues more explicitly (and perhaps rightly so) that Bellah has gone through a transition in his position from a consensus model toward one that includes conflict, critique, and strife. Bellah himself insists that he does not subscribe to the "functional" integrative interpretation of civil religion, and that there has been no change over time on the "consensus/conflict axis" in his examination of civil religion (Bellah, 1976:154; 1989:147). In any case, the civil religion envisioned for America by Bellah is "a common civic faith born, in large measure, of the need to sustain a pluralistic culture by transcending its divergent and particularist religious perspective." So, despite some qualifications, there is little doubt that Bellah's analysis is Durkheimian, and most other accounts of civil religion fall in line (Cristi and Dawson, 1996:323). Indeed, the general tendency has been to assume that civil religion, at least in America, "both stems from, and shores up a cultural consensus and moral unity that society requires for its very existence" (Demerath and William, 1985:156, 163).

Durkheim's theory of religion has been understood to mean that religion unites people or integrates the society. As such, any society 'naturally' produces a common ("civil") religion. However, as Hammond rightly notes, Durkheim argued not only that religion "engenders cohesiveness," but that the phenomenon of cohesion has a religious dimension. For Hammond, the starting point of Durkheim's theory in *The Elementary Forms* is "the fact of unity more than the fact of religion." In this sense, religion "is more the *expression* of an integrated society than it is the *source* of a society's integration" (Hammond, 1980c:139).

In any case, Durkheim's thesis implies a cohesive "moral community" that is not artificially created or manipulated. It implies, therefore, a cultural phenomenon that tends to be "naturally" engendered. The quasi-religious feelings and sentiments that it elicits are believed to be widely shared by members of the community. These structural components (spontaneity and overall consensus) are the basic elements of the Durkheimian model. This model, where civil religion emerges out of culture rather than being consciously created, has provided American scholars with the blueprint for the interpretation and explanation of civil religion in America and elsewhere (e.g., in Canada, see Kim, 1993; Cheal, 1978). Even a quick review of the literature suggests that the assumptions of a national "moral community" or the "moral consensus" implicit in the notion of civil religion, together with its capacity to unite diverse sectors of the American population are seldom made problematic. Scholars have not even considered the possibility that civil religion may itself be a factor promoting disintegration. Neither have they explored the idea that civil religion may be an 'explicit' ideology rather than an 'implicit' cultural phenomenon. So, the Rousseauan viewpoint, where political leaders consciously exploit and/or manipulate traditional religious

symbols to achieve political goals has seldom been explored. There is no doubt that Durkheim's ghost has a presence in the literature on civil religion.

II.4 Some Voices of Dissent

Those few who oppose the integrationist view of civil religion argue that the transcendent religious dimension, and reality, identified by Bellah in American society is more diversified and complex than envisioned. Jones and Richey detect five varieties of civil religion. They distinguish between folk religion, religious nationalism, democratic faith, Protestant civic piety, and a transcendent universal religion of the nation (1974:3-18). Accounts of civil religion portrayed as religious nationalism, democratic faith, or Protestant civic piety are largely found in the non-sociological literature, specially in the work of church historians and philosophers (Gehrig, 1981a:52).

Folk religion is a non-normative religion "emerging out of the life of the folk." In *religious nationalism* the nation itself becomes sacralized, the object of veneration and glorification. *Democratic faith*, basically means that humanistic values and ideals of equality, freedom, and justice are "religionized," representing a sort of national creed, but without necessarily depending on a "transcendent deity" or specific religious denomination. *Protestant civic piety* refers to the apparently stable alliance of Protestantism and nationalism in America, i.e., to the pervading "Protestant colouring" of the American ethos. Finally, the *transcendent universal religion of the nation* is a normative religion "rendering prophetic judgement" on the nation (Richey and Jones, 1974:14-18). These scholars observe that all of these forms constitute different kinds of civil

religions and charge that Bellah seems to assume only the latter meaning, ignoring the other varieties (Richey and Jones, 1974:14-18).

Richard Fenn, perhaps the most vocal opponent of the integrationist thesis, questions the very existence of American civil religion. He is especially "skeptical of Bellah's transcendent model" (Gehrig, 1981b:17). Fenn rejects the assumption that any religion, civil religion included, can provide a basis for social cohesion or solidarity in modern societies. The pluralistic and secular nature of advanced societies makes the question of integration, based on religious symbolism, a "present and future impossibility." No religion can offer the moral integration necessary to make religion a "compelling national creed." The reason is simple: modern societies do not require a religiously- based cultural consensus at their core any longer. Cultural integration nowadays depends more on "techniques" of socialization than on "religious training." So, religion in advanced societies has no major social functions for the "total" social system. Fenn also rejects the idea, or the possibility, of the integration of modern societies "into moral communities." This, in his opinion, is again a practical impossibility. But he does not reject the possibility that religion may still retain "expressive" functions for particular individuals or particular groups, or may even help define "boundaries," or help "legitimize" the demands of different groups (Fenn, 1972:27-31).

Fenn notes that in modern (and pluralistic) societies, the individual is faced with a variety of sources from which to select group affiliations. Moreover, the process of differentiation and secularization, characteristic of modernity, has produced a situation where only "partial" rather than "total" ideologies can exist. Partial ideologies may unite people around separate issues and sets of interests, but it is unlikely that a total ideology could develop "that could mobilize the passion and the intelligence of an entire population" (Fenn, 1972:18). Under these circumstances, no religious

system can offer an overall normative basis of integration, and no "set of religious symbols" can monopolize authority within the culture (Fenn, 1972:17). Fenn, in fact, warns sociologists to be more cautious in claiming "to have found 'functional alternatives'" for religion for the society as a whole (e.g., Bellah's civil religion, "mass entertainment," science, or even "aesthetics"). So he concludes that cultural integration "may be possible only on the level of pragmatic interests and utilitarian norms" (Fenn, 1972:18). Contrary to Bellah's views, Fenn argues that consensus in modern society is not so much based on "values" (religious or otherwise) but rather on the "requirements of efficiency." In a Weberian sense, these requirements refer to the "rule of the experts" and their ability to satisfy popular demands, or in a Marxist sense, to efficiency in satisfying the demands of the market or the needs of the "cash nexus" (Fenn, 1972:28).

Total cultural integration, one may agree with Fenn, seems an unlikely possibility in the modern world. However, *partial* ideologies do generate *partial* cultural integration. Only certain segments of the population share specific values, beliefs or norms, and only certain societal groups have the power to try to enforce them. Lukes has aptly referred to this as the "mobilization of bias," which he defines as that "set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals and constitutional procedures that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at the expense of others" (Lukes, 1975:305). Fenn fails to consider the cultural integration (moral community) of dominant groups, or in Stevens' words (1975:363) the "programmatic consensus" of political elites. In addition, Fenn also fails to consider the possibility that civil religion itself may be a part the "socialization techniques" of modern societies, a point to which I will return in Chapter Three.

In sum, despite the persuasiveness of their views, the dissenting voices are few (Cherry, 1970; Fenn, 1976; Garrett, 1976; Lukes 1975). The general tendency continues to be to define civil

religion as a phenomenon which 'naturally' promotes social cohesion. Scant attention has been given to the ideological divide which is likely to develop when values are interpreted by different groups in terms of their own political interests and agendas (Stevens, 1975:363: Gehrig, 1981a:57). This helps to explain why students of civil religion in general, and American scholars in particular, have paid even less attention to cases of forced or imposed civil religion, or to cases of civil religion used as a political resource whether in the context of American society or in other international contexts.

The state-appropriation of civil religion is more apparent in times of profound political crises. Indeed, when the swaying edifice of democracy is either on the brink of collapsing or when it has already collapsed, political leaders seem to turn their attention to civil religion (see Cristi and Dawson, 1996; Purdy, 1982; Regan, 1976). This would suggest that while some generalized form of a national self-sacralization may be a constant of any society, we may also expect episodic manifestations of specific civil religions. In other words, the "transcendent reality" identified by Bellah (civil religion and its politico-religious symbol system), may not be a permanent feature of society (i.e., a relatively stable system of meaning), so much as something that varies with particular historical or national circumstances. Consequently, civil religious 'themes' would tend to emerge or become more visible in periods of national or international crises. As Wilson points out (1974:136), a particular model of civil religion "may prove to 'fit' one era but not others."

Marty was perhaps one of the first scholars to argue that civil religion is "episodic" and can be used to "fill different needs at different times." In his view, civil religion is a "cluster of episodes which come and go, recede back to invisibility after making their appearance; only gradually are they institutionalized and articulated in organizational form" (Marty, 1974:141). This view has been

reiterated by other authors. Regan notes that during periods of political stability, civil religious elements, although present, "appear as a minor motif of institutional life." Only when events threaten to disrupt the political environment, does the development of civil religion becomes a major concern (Regan, 1976:104; Wilson, 1979:21).[43] Under these circumstances, civil religion may be seen as a phenomenon arising in response to "episodic crises of legitimation," uniting and integrating those in power, rather than as a permanent "legitimator of power and authority in the polity" (Purdy, 1982:314).

The comparative literature tends to confirm the episodic nature, or episodic use of civil religion (see Cristi and Dawson, 1996; Takayama, 1988; Adams, 1987; Purdy, 1982; Markoff and Regan, 1981; Brasswell, 1979; Stevens, 1975; Regan, 1976). These studies suggest that political leaders, in periods of significant political transition or extreme social turmoil, use the religious symbol system both as a tool of social control and as a vehicle for the legitimization of their political actions. This is not to say, however, that a 'more visible' civil religion is necessarily an essential or even efficacious solution to political crises.

Seminal as these comparative studies are, they point to the need to revise Durkheim's notion of civil religion, and pay more attention to Rousseau. Even in the context of American society, the assumption that civil religion is a widely-shared, spontaneous phenomenon uniting most Americans under a sacred canopy, does not hold true. Only in extraordinary cases (perhaps in Islamic countries, in Israel, or in periods of great natural disasters or grave social crises) may spontaneous integration

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[43]Such was the case in Malaysia in the aftermath of the riots of May 1969. Regan shows that the government, searching for a means to restore political stability and national integration, turned to civil religion. Civil religion seems to have emerged as a temporary solution to "consociational politics of accommodation" (Regan, 1976:95).

occur.[44] In exceptional circumstances one may find a whole group, community, or society, temporarily united under a common cause requiring service to the nation over the satisfaction of individual needs.

Again, by taking the Durkheimian approach, scholars have been forced, so to speak, to equate civil religion with a national civic faith. If civil religion performs a role for society as a whole, then by logical necessity it has to be a national religion. However, every civil religion is not by definition a national civil religion (although most authors assume it is). Liebman and Don-Yehiya (1983), for example, accept the belief that the existence of civil religion depends on the extent to which a *nation-state* views itself as a "moral community." By moral community they mean a group united by common values and a common cause, which requires sacrifices for the benefit of the whole nation. Their equation of "moral community" only with a nation-state is problematic. Groups such as the Michigan Militia in the United States constitute a group united under common cause and common values. They make up a "moral community," not in the sense of being ethical or honourable, but in the sense of uniting a group of people under a common goal and a common

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[44] Islam, for example, represents a special case of civil religion. In Islamic countries the religious and political spheres are hardly separable (Bellah, 1968:391). There is little or no distinction between religious affiliation and national identity. Muslim and citizen are two ways of saying the same thing (Regan, 1976:96). In the last few years, however, Egypt and Syria are clearly trying to separate the two spheres, as opposed to Iran and Pakistan, for example. The case of Israel requires some qualification as well. Clearly, the most salient belief of Israeli civil religion "is Israel as a Jewish state." Ninety -three percent of Israelis believe that Israel ought to be a Jewish state. This applies even to atheists or agnostics (Liebman and Don-Yehiha, 1983:24). What unites all Jews under a 'moral community' and a common 'moral' cause, is fundamentally their 'Jewishness.' So, here too, religious affiliation and national identity are intimately linked. It goes without saying that Arabs, who comprise roughly seventeen percent of the population of Israel proper (excluding those of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip), are not part of Israel's moral community. This does not mean, however, that Israel has had a single civil religion. Throughout Israel's history there have been a variety of interpretations of what a Jewish state ought to be (e.g., Zionism-socialism, revisionism, statism, etc). When a particular interpretation has been dominant, other significant segments of the Jewish population have been excluded. Political, ideological and religious confrontation and disagreements on how to express the Jewish identity, and how to transmit it to future generations, have not been uncommon. So, even in this very unique and special case, the outcome has been a civil religion that has not led to consensus and integration (Liebman & Don-Yehiya, 1983:13-14).

banner, but they do not represent the nation as a whole. Groups as diverse as those formed by political elites, guerrillas, or terrorists may feel united, as Durkheim would say, by a "community of interests" which makes them conscious of their "moral" unity (Durkheim, 1912/1961:432). Obviously, they do not constitute a "moral community" in a national sense. Moodie's (1975) analysis of civil religion in South Africa is another case in point. It clearly suggests that South African civil religion, far from being a national civic faith, was the religion of a white Afrikaner minority. The case of Chile under Pinochet, discussed in Chapter Five, is yet another example. In other words, the "nation" in some cases may be just a small group of political elites, military rulers, or even a group of fanatics which, by no means, represents the entire country.

Those who oppose the idea that there are cohesive moral communities charge that the idea of an integrative civil religion is no more than a "social construction"--the creation of an intellectual or academic elite (Marty, 1974:141). Garrett reflects this position, confining civil religion to "a small cortege of intellectual and cultural elites" (cited in Bellah, 1976a:154). Novak speaks of a "high-church" civil religion sustained chiefly by what he calls the "Northeastern elites" (Novak, 1992:138). Others have argued that civil religion's language of 'cohesion' and 'integration' has become an inauthentic rhetoric, a "rhetoric without reality," or a "socially constructed myth" (Demerath and Williams, 1985:164; Gehrig, 1981a:56). This has led Demerath and Williams to observe that the civil religion of America is "losing both emotional depth and historical continuity" (1985:163). On the whole, however, those who have criticized the civil religion thesis, its spontaneous and widely integrative impact in society, have been few and their voices have not really been heard.

The claim that civil religion may not act as a stable integrative force in society, should not obscure the fact that civil religion, as a response to political crises, may be used to justify and legitimize a political integration decreed by ruling elites, or even ordained by decree, as the cases of Spain, Chile, Malaysia, and China testify (see Stevens, 1975; Cristi and Dawson, 1996; Regan, 1976; Zuo, 1991). In short, as Demerath and Williams have rightly argued, Rousseau's view of an imposed civil religion devised "as a way of manipulating public loyalties" may, in some circumstances, be more viable than Durkheim's understanding "of a culturally grounded" civic faith based on widely-shared set of values and "moral commitments" (Demerath and Williams, 1985:165).

II.5 Civil Religion as a Source of Legitimation

In the following chapter I will survey some of the major theoretical issues raised by the notion of legitimation. What follows is only a brief discussion of civil religion, as a source of legitimation, in the context of American society.

Peter Berger (1967:29) defines legitimations as "socially objectified knowledge that serves to explain and justify the social order." Religion performs a legitimating function insofar as it provides "an ultimate system of meaning" which helps to interpret and explain social existence in a way that justifies the extant socio-political order. Berger notes that there are many sources of political legitimation, of which religion is only one, but, in his view, religion has historically been "the most important, widespread and effective instrumentality of legitimation" (Berger, 1967:34).

In a similar vein, De Azevedo (1979:8) notes that all political regimes, democratic or not, "*ont besoin d'une mystique propre, d'une sorte de metaphysique qui les explique et les justifie et, en outre, les rende legitimes devant le pays et le reste du monde*" (De Azevedo 1979:8). In his view,

this *mystique* has usually been provided by religion. Because societies customarily have sought to legitimize their social institutions in transcendental terms, or in terms of an "ultimate set of values," the starting point for the study of legitimation has often been religion (Gehrig, 1981b:35).

The idea that religion acts as a source of legitimation goes back, perhaps, to the dawn of social reflection, but, for our purposes, we need to go no further back than Durkheim. As discussed in Chapter One, Durkheim considers religion to be "an essential and permanent" feature of humanity, i.e., of any society (Durkheim, 1912/1961a:13). He defines religion as a system of beliefs and practices which separates the sacred from the profane. But also, as a "system of ideas with which the individuals represent to themselves the society of which they are members" (1912/1961a:257). As such, religion, integration, and legitimation are hardly separable. Religion legitimates the social order by providing an ultimate system of beliefs and values essential for social behavior.

Bellah, following the Durkheimian tradition and, in his view, "one of the oldest sociological generalizations," notes that "any coherent and viable society" rests on a "common set of moral understandings" about right and wrong, which in turn "must . . . rest upon a common set of religious understandings." It is through these common religious understandings that people are able to have "a picture of the universe in terms of which the moral understandings make sense" (Bellah, 1975:ix). Bellah argues that such moral and religious meaning systems provide both a "cultural legitimation" and a basic "standard of judgement" from which society can be criticized. Bellah claims that there has always been (and perhaps there will always be), a certain tension between religion, legitimation, morality, and civic responsibility. So, any society has to confront this tension or, put it in another form, it has to confront the "religio-political problem." It is in this confrontation

or dialectical tension between religion and politics that Bellah locates the essence of civil religion (Bellah, 1980a:vii-ix).

As already noted, Bellah argues that from the beginnings of the American republic moral understandings, rooted in a conception of divine order under God, have performed legitimating functions in American society. These moral understandings are historically contingent and subject to change. So, the possibility for renewal, rebirth, and even erosion, of civil religious values is always present. In fact, Bellah recognizes that the legitimating power of American values has eroded, and that values themselves have suffered a transformation. In early America, he argues, "personal virtue" was seen as the essential basis of a good society, and freedom was "almost equivalent to virtue." A virtuous individual was one who had the freedom to "do good." As a 'chosen people' Americans had certain moral obligations. The values of freedom, justice, and charity provided the basis of their religious self-understanding. Yet, American Puritans permitted slavery, whereas Americans would not tolerate it today. Moreover, under the influence of utilitarianism, freedom to "do good" slowly came to signify freedom "to pursue self-interest," which, as Bellah points out, has now come to be understood as "freedom to do your own thing" (Bellah, 1975:xii). In other words, what *virtue, freedom* or *justice* means for the twentieth century American, bears little resemblance to what it did for the eighteenth-century Puritans. But Bellah believes that the symbols of American civil religion still "retain the power" to legitimate American social experience (Gehrig, 1981b:36).

Indeed, Bellah is convinced that a common denominator can be found between America today and early American society: a "religious dimension" or a religious self-understanding of the American way of life. He suggests that despite the profound potential for transformation there is, at

least in America, some timeless element in civil religion. American civil religion, its symbols, and the "mythological structure that supports it," helps every new generation of Americans interpret, understand, and legitimate their social existence "in the light of a transcendent reality" (Bellah, 1975:3). While religio-political notions may have a radically different connotation for Americans today, "they are at the heart of the American political heritage" (Gehrig, 1981a:58).

Commentators agree with Bellah's idea that religious values (such as a nation under God) and political values (i.e., democratic ideals) have always marched hand in hand in America, for religion and politics have always been intimately interwoven. Religion was (and perhaps still is) an important source of legitimation for the political order in the U.S. De Tocqueville, during his visit to America in 1831, was, perhaps, one of the first to note the 'peculiar religious' character of American social life. He observed that from the very genesis of the republic "politics and religion contracted an alliance which has never been dissolved" (in Hammond, 1976: 174). At the same time, he spoke of American church religion as a "political institution which powerfully contributed to the maintenance of a democratic republic" by providing a strong moral consensus amidst endless political change (Bellah, 1967:12).

De Tocqueville was particularly impressed by the marriage in American society of religious values and democratic ideas. This was novel and unique since in America there was no state church (as in England), and no politically imposed belief system. De Tocqueville reflected that the "symbiotic relationship" between the religious and the political system was the result of the "innovative American feature of legal nonestablishment" (Gehrig, 1981b:6). Hammond echoes De Tocqueville's views and argues that the non-problematic union of politics and religion in the United

States "lies in the pluralistic, religious libertarian, disestablishment pattern that emerged early in the life of the nation" (1976:176).

De Tocqueville never used the term civil religion. Instead he presented a model of a new religion, which he called "republican religion," whereby religious and political values were intimately linked. His study was the "first description of a democratic belief system" based upon the religious, moral, and socio-historical traditions of American society. De Tocqueville differentiated this belief system, as Bellah did more than a century later, both structurally and functionally, from political and religious organizations (Gehrig, 1981b:7). What De Tocqueville described as a "republican religion" or "republican virtue" was a synthesis of democratic and religious values and a belief in a supreme being. This mixture, in his view, was the basis of good citizenship and social cohesion in America (Gehrig, 1981b:24). As Gehrig has observed, while Rousseau "developed the notion of civil religion, theoretically, when formulating the requirements for a modern polity, De Tocqueville discovered republican religion empirically" when he crossed the Atlantic and visited North America. His notion of a republican religion has been instrumental for students of American civil religion (both for sociologists and social scientists in general), and has had a great impact on American political thought (Gehrig, 1981b:6-7). Indeed, De Tocqueville's conception of "republican religion" is undoubtedly a forerunner to Mead's "Religion of the Republic" and to Bellah's classical analysis of civil religion.[45]

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[45] It is interesting to note that the term *civil religion* turned out to be far more "tendentious and provocative" than even Bellah at first realized. Paradoxically, Mead's "republican religion," or "religion of the republic" or terms such as "political religion," or "public piety," or "public philosophy," as Bellah himself has noted, appeared to be more "neutral terms." For some reason they never provoked the "the profound empirical ambiguity that the terms *civil religion* with its two thousand years of historical resonance inevitably did" (Bellah, 1978:16).

Ever since the publication of *Democracy in America*, scholars and politicians have reflected on De Tocqueville's ideas. Key figures in American political thought have been influenced by him. Bellah's debt to De Tocqueville is quite evident. Bellah observes that the idea "that religion is the basis of public morality and so the indispensable underpinning of a republican political order is a constant theme from Washington's Farewell Address to the present" (Bellah, 1976:156). Following De Tocqueville, Bellah assigns primary importance to the power of religious symbols to integrate American society.

Obviously not all scholars agree on the legitimating role of religion. At one end of the pole we find authors such as Fenn who reject the idea of religion as a legitimating factor in modern society. At the other end, there are those who believe that, despite the long-term trend of secularization in western societies, religion still functions to legitimate the social order. Bellah is a prime representative of this view. He believes that religion will never cease to have cultural and social resonance (Hamilton, 1995:165). Those in the middle ground position believe that, although religion in modern societies has no "*direct* control" over the legitimation of the political order, it still exerts an "*indirect* influence" (Fenn, 1974:144).

We have already seen that Fenn doubts that a post-industrial, technocratic society can be held together by religious beliefs or by systems of overarching values--the process of secularization makes religious legitimation unnecessary. Fenn distinguishes five stages in the process of secularization. Each stage involves both conflict and negotiation between secular authority and religious authority. These stages are: 1) differentiation of religious roles and institutions; 2) differentiation of boundaries between religious and secular issues; 3) emergence of overarching religious symbols which transcends the group interests in society (it is at this stage that he sees the development of

civil religions); 4) "definitions of the situation" from the point of view of minority groups; and, 5) differentiation between individual and corporate value systems (in Hamilton, 1995:179). It is interesting to note that Fenn sees the development of civil religions as a "stage" in the process of secularization, but also as a "de-secularizing" force (Hamilton, 1995:180). Commenting on this dual tendency, Hamilton notes: "in attempting to determine definitions of the situation the state may seek to curb religious autonomy and restrict the scope of religion, especially sectarian forms, yet at the same time seek to borrow the authority of sacred themes and principles in order to legitimate itself" (1995:180).

The process of secularization, Fenn argues, has resulted in religion losing both social control and social significance, and handing over its traditional legitimating functions to other social institutions, such as the educational, political, economic or legal systems (Fenn, 1974:143).[46] Secularization, however, "does not drive religion from modern society, but rather it fosters a type of religion which has no major functions for the *entire* society" (1972:31). In Fenn's views, the form of "religious culture" most harmonious with modern society is that which "grants a limited scope to the sacred" and clearly differentiates between corporate and individual value systems (in Hamilton, 1995:180).

Fenn dismisses the legitimating function of civil religion by presenting an argument very similar to the one he used to reject its integrative function. That is, legitimacy in modern societies depends not on the "manipulation of religious symbols," but rather on the capacity of those in power

[46] Casanova (1994:19-39) has argued that the term 'secularization' has become almost "unserviceable" for social research due to the confusion and great variety of processes to which the term applies. While theories of secularization have tended to predict a decline and eventual disappearance of religion, some authors suggest, or even deny, that secularization is taking place at all. For a good review of different theories and of the different meanings given to the term, see Hamilton (1995), especially Chapter 15.

to meet "popular demands" such as, for example, high levels of consumption (1972:17). This means that a religiously-based source of legitimation necessarily fades away for policies and programs are guided by criteria of technical rationality (Gehrig, 1981a:58). Fenn concludes that legitimacy will increasingly depend less on notions of "what is right," and more likely be discussed in terms of the leaders' effectiveness in meeting basic human needs, or even artificial wants. So, what really counts are not the basic values of society itself, but rather the ability to set up priorities for public policies and the capacity to 'read' the needs of the public (Fenn, 1972:27).

Stauffer, by contrast, does not reject religion altogether. He argues that even highly advanced, functionally-oriented, technocratic political systems, still need some sort of cultural legitimation. In his article "Civil Religion, Technocracy, and the Private Sphere" (1973:415-425), he rejects the position taken by "privatists" such as Luckman and Fenn who deny the need for cultural legitimation in advanced societies. Stauffer also rejects their suggestion that institutions are guided and accepted in terms of functional rationality rather than in terms of broad ideological schemes. In his view, the 'privatists' (and "the 'end of the ideology' school they represent") overlook the importance of a wide cultural consensus--at least among the powerful or dominant groups. It is in this context that he argues that the analysis of civil religion remains crucial for students of religion, and for those interested in systems of legitimation. Despite some "dubious" claims (e.g., that the national faith can be prophetic and justificatory of national purposes), he finds the concept of civil religion useful for the identification of modern legitimating systems (see also Gehrig, 1981a:58; 1981b:84-85).

According to Hammond, religious freedom and voluntarism in America (i.e., the fact that churches were left to "compete" as voluntary associations) led to an unusual conception of the separation of church and state whereby the religious and political organizations are kept separate,

but the symbols are not. Hammond argues that in "exchange for the right to believe" as they wished. Americans surrendered the "church's monopoly on religious symbols and shared them with government." This has meant that politicians and government officials have not had "to compete politically with churches." On the contrary, churches in the United States have had to compete with one another rather than with the state. This has allowed political leaders in America to be both "favourable" to religion and "free" to use religious symbolism. Not surprisingly, he notes, we find in America a civil government with a profound "religious flavour" (Hammond, 1980a:67-71), or in Chesterton's terms, once again, "a nation with a soul of a church." Hammond rightly argues that this "religious flavour," this 'churchly soul,' is quite apparent in the rhetoric of presidential inaugural addresses and Presidential campaigns.[47] According to Bellah, the God of American civil religion, the God that Presidents use in inaugural addresses or political campaigns, while "actively . . . involved in the history of Americans" is a nonsectarian or ecumenical God (Bellah, 1967:7-8).

The preceding discussion suggests that the relationship between religion and politics in post-modern America is still alive and well. Demerath and Williams (1985:162) have observed what they consider to be the "great incongruity" of American existence. Americans have "long prided [themselves] on the *paradox* of great religious freedom combined with strong religious observance." Perhaps this should not come as a surprise or be considered so paradoxical after all. The words of Philip Schaff (1888:15-16), more than a century ago, may help to remind us of this. He noted that religious freedom in the United States is "an orderly exercise of religious duty and enjoyment of all its privileges. It is freedom *in* religion, not freedom *from* religion . . . " (cited in Rouner, 1986:114).

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[47] See, for example, Bellah (1976); Donahue (1975); Adams (1987); Bennett (1975); Wilson (1979).

So, despite Fenn's and others' voices disclaiming the efficacy of religion for legitimating the political order, American politicians have not lost sight of the politico-religious link. This alliance of religion and politics in America is well established and well documented. As Donahue notes, the old idea of the public utility of religion seems to be well learned by every new generation of leaders holding political power (Donahue, 1975:65). Even today when political figures seem to be judged in terms of secular criteria, such as economic stability, religion in America is not easily disregarded. Indeed, several authors have noted that of all the modern industrialized nations in the world, the United States appears to be the least secularized, if secularization is measured in terms of church attendance (Hamilton, 1995:169). Commentators have also noted that American political leaders continue to give a prominent role to religious symbols both when shaping their political agendas and when trying to define themselves politically (Donahue 1975:49; Demerath and Williams, 1985:160).[48] In other words, American politicians continue to borrow the authority of religion to legitimate their political ends.

Donahue, for example, has identified several politico-religious symbol "clusters" which American political officials employ "consciously or not," "with manipulative intent or not," in their attempt to win the electorate. These clusters include explicit biblical references, messages of "political and religious righteousness," political campaigns equated with religious crusades, the image of political leaders as "prophets," "pleading redemption," or "imploring a divine mandate" (Donahue, 1975:49-51). This is not a one way relationship, however, for the "religious rhetoric" of

[48] Despite the alliance of religion and politics in the United States, studies have shown that the use of religious rhetoric in political campaigns is not a "dependable strategy for winning votes." It might even be counterproductive. This means that the use of politico-religious discourse in campaign speeches "does not of itself win or lose elections for candidates," not at least in North America (Donahue, 1975:52). See also Demerath and Williams (1985).

politicians parallels, at the same time, the "political rhetoric" of church officials. Hammond claims that as a result of the politico-religious alliance or, of the "ambiguous line" of demarcation between church and state, the pulpit in the United States has been politicized, and "such politics often are expressed in terms of"American civil religion (Hammond, 1976:177). One should add that the nation, likewise, has been sacralized and such sacredness is also expressed in terms of American civil religion.

I have already pointed out that civil religion implies a meaning system, and entails the use of religious language and imagery to sacralize civic life. As noted at the beginning of the chapter, one of the key elements embodied in the meaning system of American civil religion is a "messianic conception" of America as an instrument of God and an "exemplary utopia." America sees itself as a "redeemer nation and Americans as chosen people," entrusted with the preservation of democracy and freedom in the world (Anthony and Robbins, 1982:230, 216; see also Regan, 1976:101).[49] Coleman (1969:74) reminds us that it is the nation itself, "not the national government as such," that is believed to be endowed with churchly characteristics and virtues. He further notes that the nation that is "sanctified is the *ideal* America as the land of freedom, justice, and mercy" (emphasis added, Coleman, 1969:75).

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[49] This has been the message conveyed by the moral dimension of the civil religion "ethos" and by political propaganda. However, the crude reality has not been the preservation of freedom and democracy but the support and preservation of a global free-market system, to maintain and enhance America's economic interests and profits. The United States support of right-wing military dictatorships around the world, the granting of China's "special status," in spite of its bloody suppression of the Tiananmen Square democracy movement and of continued violation of human rights, are reminders of this situation. Hammond has put it very directly, "most people, even if they know about, don't regret US support to dictators but applaud it in the name of anticommunism" (Hammond, 1980:195). Hans Morgenthau put it even more forcefully. "The United States," he writes, "is repression's friend...with unfailing consistency, we have since the end of the Second World War intervened on behalf of conservative and fascist repression against revolution and radical reform...we have become the foremost counter revolutionary status quo power on earth" (in Huntington, 1981:247). The American civil religion ethos has "entailed a sanctification of American society, its laissez-faire economic processes, its democratic political processes, and its military and international might" (Anthony and Robbins, 1982:217).

Fenn has rightly argued that a society would collapse, or at least could not long survive, if the majority of its citizens consider it to be "transitory," an illusion, morally wrong, or otherwise with no value in itself. In his view, every society relies for its survival "on the tendency of most individuals to 'take it for granted' most of the time" (Fenn, 1974:145). Despite Fenn's criticism of the functionalist account of religion, he has accepted, to some degree, Durkheim's theory that every relatively stable society will possess a set of shared beliefs that express the highest aspirations of the collectivity. This set of common beliefs, Durkheim would have agreed, is what individuals "take for granted." While for Durkheim, Bellah, and their intellectual heirs values are elevated to a level of transcendence, Fenn believes that technical rationality, not religious symbols, contribute to this "taken for granted" knowledge. This would confirm Hamilton's claim that Fenn's roots lie with the Durkheimian/functionalist approach, and that he has not entirely broken with this tradition (Hamilton 1995:181).

In sum, despite some disagreement on this issue, most scholars agree that modern societies still seek to legitimize the socio-political order in terms of an ultimate set of values (Gehrig, 1981b:35). This is what De Azevedo (1979) has called a "mystique" (or a system of meaning) which every society needs to explain and justify itself. Generally speaking, then, legitimation falls within the realm of religion. But legitimation also falls within the realm of power, for the "problem of legitimacy" includes, among other things, the question of whether an "existing political authority is moral and right or whether it violates higher religious duties" (Bellah, 1980a:viii). In fact, as Kokosalakis (1985:371) remarks, legitimation "always involves the justification of power."

But students of civil religion have not really explored, or perhaps even understood, the historical legacy of civil religion in its ideological (political) form, and the link between power and

religion (politics and ideology). Given the fact that political figures are, to a large extent, the official interpreters of civil religion, any civil religion may be used for political ends. As a political tool civil religion may be invoked (to a greater or lesser degree) to legitimate and justify political power. Hughey has rightly argued that Bellah has been largely unable to see the "ideological implications of his own intellectual effort, or for that matter, to recognize the significance of intellectuals, prophets, and individuals generally in the formulation and rationalization of religious and moral ideas" (Hughey, 1983:26). This, and related issues, will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter III

The "Problem" of Legitimacy, Power and Politics

This chapter undertakes six analytic tasks: 1) It begins with a brief examination of the intellectual development of the notion of legitimacy--my starting point for the discussion of the "problem" and its relation to religion. 2) The notion of legitimacy as expressed in sociological theory is examined next, paying special attention to Weber's theory of legitimation. 3) This is followed by a discussion of the role played by religion in contemporary life. 4) Next, I critically examine the linkage between civil religion and power, noting scholarly neglect of the political and ideological dimensions of civil religion. 5) Since this oversight is attributed in part to the structuralist-consensus position adopted by most students of civil religion, the religio-political problem, in the context of this tradition, is briefly examined. 6) The chapter concludes with a discussion regarding the civic agents or structural 'carriers' of civil religion. This is essential in order to understand how the state may use civil religion for political purposes. It is also important to clarify my position that civil religion in America does not constitute a belief system *fully* independent and separate from the state.

III.1 The Classical Problem and Its Intellectual Roots

What is often referred to as the problem of legitimacy includes, among other things, the question of whether authority is perceived as right and proper, or whether it violates "higher religious duties." This potential tension between religious and political authority has been resolved or institutionalized in a variety of ways in different societies. As Bellah observes, "whether we wish to call such forms of institutionalization civil religions or confine that term to only some of such forms, it is here that we must locate the problem of civil religion" (Bellah, 1980a:viii). Simply put, the 'classical problem' refers to the question of how some individuals come to have the right to rule over others, or how a political authority comes to be accepted, by the majority of those governed, as morally entitled to demand obedience.

Most ancient and primitive societies were theocratic: divinity, society, and the individual constituted a single cosmological whole. So there was no distinction between religious and political institutions or between religious and political authority. "Originally," Rousseau writes, "men had no kings save the gods, and no government save theocracy" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:268). The political order was simply a manifestation of the sacred realm--a microcosm of the divinely instituted cosmic order (Berger, 1967:34). Politically powerful individuals were perceived as agents or representatives of a supreme power or god (Gehrig, 1981b:35). Political conformity and political opposition were equated with either admission into a perfect cosmic order or alliance with chaotic and demonic forces (Bellah 1980a:viii; Takayama, 1988:330). As Bellah notes, beyond the boundaries of "cosmic harmony" or divine kingship, there was nothing but "outer darkness" (Bellah, 1980a:viii). The world was regulated by a religion of "functional deities." Gods of "locality," "tribe," "polity," and the gods of war, who guaranteed the social and political order, were all in

charge of everyday routines, and of protecting their own particular interests (Weber, 1915/1958:333). Hence, in undifferentiated societies, legitimation, as we understand it today, was not really necessary-- everything worked according to a divine plan or a natural-divine cosmos. All human action--social, political, even personal, was filtered through religious symbols and practices (Berger, 1973:314).

Bellah observes that once historic religions emerge, there is a "reorientation" of divine-kingship symbolism, which forces the development of "structures of religious" authority that are, in principle, autonomous or independent of the state (as in the case of the Christian church, for example). This means that the relation to the divine is "unmediated by political authority." Ordinary people can relate to a god without the direct mediation of the divine king. On the other hand, it also means that political authority does not have to share power with the authority of the gods. There are cases, however, where clearly differentiated religious structures do not emerge (e.g., Confucianism, the Jewish and Muslim cases). In such circumstances, political authority is considered illegitimate when it does not "conform to transcendent ethical norms" held by society. Jumping to modern times, a third possibility emerges when a "distinct set of religious symbols and practices" deals with issues of political legitimacy and political ethics that are not fused with either religious or political organizations. That is, this distinct set of religious symbols is independent of both church and state. This is the solution to the religio-political problem that characterizes, in Bellah's view, the American case (Bellah, 1980a:viii-x).

Christianity, the process of modernization, the growth of rationalism, trends toward secularization, are some of the factors accounting for the end of theocratic forms of polity, and for the eventual separation of church and state. It was a "Christian innovation," Apter writes, to make

the distinction "between the sacred and the secular spheres by challenging the state religion of Rome" (Apter, 1963:68). The death of theocracy, however, did not entail the disappearance of religion from public life. On the contrary, through most of Western history some form of Christianity has been the official religion and has provided "religious legitimation to the state" (Bellah, 1978:16). Winfred E. Garrison's rightly observes that,

> for more than fourteen hundred years . . . it was a universal assumption that the stability of the social order and the safety of the state demanded the religious solidarity of all the people in one church. Every responsible thinker, every ecclesiastic, every ruler and statesman who gave the matter any attention, held to this as an axiom. There was no political or social philosophy which did not build upon this assumption . . . all . . . believed firmly that religious solidarity in the one recognized church was essential to social and political stability" (cited in Mead, 1963:60).

It is no surprise that the notion of political legitimacy, as a theoretical issue, explicitly emerged only in late Antiquity or high Middle Ages (the Greeks, for example, had no word for legitimacy as distinct from lawfulness). Its genesis is said to have coincided with the emergence of representative government. As Merquior notes, when "the 'direct' democracy of the polis" gradually faded away and new forms of rule appeared, a problem arose: "the problem of how to justify the legitimacy of *representatives*" (Merquior, 1980:25).

Ever since that need originated, the 'problem of legitimation' has been at the very heart of social scientists' concern with the nature of modern society. Indeed, as Garrison's remark makes clear, the relation between legitimacy and religion, and the idea of the political utility of religion, is part of a long tradition of Western political thought. Already in the 1500s, Machiavelli (1469-

1527) observed that it was essential to the successful prince that he appear to be religious, for religion was a powerful instrument of social control. The prince, Machiavelli advised, should encourage a religion that teaches "that he who best serves the State best serves the gods." It is also critical that the prince should appear to "whoever sees and hears him, all pity, all faith, all integrity, all humanity, and all religion." He warned that "this last quality" was the most essential and necessary (Machiavelli, 1513/1980:109).

Machiavelli is one of the first thinkers to openly discuss the idea of the political importance of religion. Perhaps the first proto-theory of civil religion *a la Rousseau* is to be found in his writings. Machiavelli understood Roman civic religion as a powerful political religion, the true pillar of civic solidarity and republican virtue. Roman religion was, in his view, both a source of political legitimation, and the guarantor of the political virtue of Roman citizens. Larrain notes (1979:17) that Machiavelli is also one of the first to deal with issues directly connected with "ideological phenomena," and to link "religion to power and domination."

Classical thinkers from Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, to more modern thinkers, such as Durkheim and Weber, and even to recent writers such as Bellah, have addressed, in one form or another, the issue of the relevance of religion to the legitimation of the political order.[50] Hobbes, for example, believes that fear and ignorance are the origins of any religion. Men, he notes,

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[50] Unlike Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, Marx does not consider religion essential for the peace and stability of the commonwealth. On the contrary, he argues that religion should no longer be the "spirit" of the state, but should be expelled from the political sphere. Marx is perhaps the only thinker, among the founding fathers of sociology, who is not really interested in religion *per se*. Religion is the "catalogue of the theoretical struggles" of humankind--his own concern is practical struggles (1843/1978:14). He laments that the philosophers have only "interpreted" the world--his intention is to "change it" (1932/1978:145). Marx's aim is *human emancipation*, but this requires first *political emancipation*. The question of the relation between political emancipation and religion becomes for him "a question of the relation between political emancipation and human emancipation." Marx, in short, is not really interested in criticizing the "religious failing" of the state. Rather, his intention is to criticize the bourgeois state "in its secular form, disregarding its religious failings" (1843/1978:31).

> make little, or no inquiry into the natural causes of things, yet from the fear that proceeds from the ignorance itself, of what is that has the power to do them much good or harm, are inclined to suppose . . . several kinds of Power Invisible . . . And this fear of things invisible, is the natural seed of that, which everyone in himself calls religion . . . (Hobbes, 1975, in Larrain, 1979:23).

Despite this conceptualization of religion as the source of false notions, ideas and prejudices, Hobbes still sustains its political significance for the peace and stability of the commonwealth. In fact, his entire moral philosophy and the central place he gives to religion is politically oriented (Larrain, 1979:24). Hobbes is primarily concerned with political obedience. He wants, above all, to persuade people to obey the sovereign, but he also wishes to avoid rebellion or anything that can spark or provide a fertile ground for revolution (Kavka, 1986:20). In his concern with averting the perpetual "war of all against all," Hobbes postulates the need for religion and autocratic monarchs. Both are essential for the common good. Both are needed to keep society together (i.e., to maintain order and avoid civil war).

Hobbes advocates a state or political religion with the explicit aim of facilitating political stability. So he proposes the subordination of the church to the state, what Rousseau calls "the reunion of the two heads of the eagle." As Leo Strauss notes, Hobbes' attitude is direct and leaves no room for different interpretations: "religion must serve the State and is to be esteemed or despised according to the services or disservices rendered to the State." Religion is to be regulated by the state and never oppose the state. The sovereign power must be unrestricted if he is to protect the lives of the subjects and secure political abeyance (1973:74-75).

Hobbes believes that people can be kept in obedience by instilling in them a religious reverence for the law. This devotion to the law should be complemented with education. Citizens need to be educated about their political obligations (i.e., their duties to the state). It is essential, he believes, to make them fear, and be aware of, both the personal and social costs of rebellion. By teaching individuals the Machiavellian idea that political principles proceed from the gods, those "who break the law would learn that they do not only offend their fellow citizens but also anger their gods." As Larrain writes, Hobbes "justifies religion for the sake of the sovereign, just as Machiavelli before him, had justified it for the sake of the prince" (Larrain, 1979:23).

Rousseau's debt to Machiavelli's ideas on the utility of religion and its effects upon civic behaviour has already been noted. Going against the current of his time, which conceived of religion as the greatest source of superstition, Rousseau declares that religion is necessary both as an integrating and legitimating force. Rousseau begins Chapter I of the the *Social Contract* with his now famous sentence "man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains" (1762/1973:165). But his main concern is not how it happened. As Wuthnow rightly contends, Rousseau is not even concerned with questions such as "how can we escape this misery? or why does such evil persist." Rather, the question that the *Social Contract* attempts to answer is "what can render it legitimate?" (Wuthnow, 1988:242).

At the time Rousseau was writing, several approaches were used to explain the origin of the social order, and hence of political obedience. Political legitimacy was generally conceived as an extension of parental authority, as a right of the wealthy, as the product of conquest, or as the right of the strongest (Merquior, 1979:20). Rousseau does not accept any of these explanations. He considers them all false. Neither nature nor economic power, force or time, can engender a genuine

right or warrant political obedience. By natural rights man is born free and equal. The source of legitimate authority, Rousseau speculates, is to be found in a social contract, ordained not by fear or force, but by a commonality of interest (Merquior, 1979:18-20).

Since there is no such a thing as "natural authority," and "force creates no right," Rousseau reasons, "conventions" form the basis of, or are at the heart of, all legitimate authority among individuals (Rousseau, 1762/1973:169). Practical political principles arise to help meet the social needs of a society and the need for political obligations of citizens. He himself, as we have seen, discusses the need for a common ideology in a cohesive legitimate society (i.e., civil religion). Rousseau argues that just as the body politic needs religion to legitimate the social order, the administration of public affairs requires, in turn, that each citizen should have a religion that will make them love their duties, their country and its law. Without civic virtue, which is to be reinforced by civil religion, "the general will risks inertia, usurpation of sovereignty becomes inevitable, and illegitimacy reigns unopposed" (Merquior, 1980:23).

As societies become more internally complex, the need for legitimation increases and legitimating the social order becomes, in turn, more complicated. Gehrig observes that "complex systems of legitimation" arise in situations where "interpretations of reality" are disputed by alternative meaning systems. The separation of church and state, gods and government, creates intense competition between religious and political systems. Modern pluralistic societies, in fact, have to deal not only with the "erosion of traditional meaning systems," but with different sources of competition: the competition of religious and political institutions, and the competition of different religious systems of legitimation (Gehrig, 1981b:36).

In much of Christian history, church and state, or religion and politics, have been intimately interwoven. This relationship, however, has often been plagued by deep tensions, compromises, and unhappy alliances. The pendulum of conflict and tensions has moved either to the side of the state (the state has dominated a "restless" church and exploited it), or to the side of the church (the church has used the state for its own ends). That is, either the state has succeeded in making the church an "engine to further national policy," or the church has gotten the upper hand by utilizing the "arm of the state to further religious interests" (Krinsky, 1968:13).

Broadly speaking, once the separation of church and state occurred, the division of spheres has always remained problematic. The state has never "removed its refusal of final allegiance" (Bellah, 1978:17). The church, on the other hand, has never accepted the loss of authority either. It has been forced, so to speak, to create the ideal of temporal rule, as a means to compensate for or substitute its own power for that of the state. As a result, the religious system and the political system have become two competing ideologies, each representing "powerful institutional forces" (Apter, 1963:66-68). All this has occurred despite some "great periodic yearnings in Western history" to create a society "where there would be no split in the soul between Christian and citizen" (Bellah, 1978:17).[51]

The modern state has not escaped this tension. Political authority, by claiming the right to make life-and-death decisions, both with respect to "internal deviants and external enemies," deals obviously with matters of ultimate concern (Bellah, 1980:vii). Weber reminds us that force is a

[51] In fifteenth-century Florence, Savonarola "had such a dream" and so did the Anabaptists in Germany, and Calvin in Geneva in the sixteenth-century. In America that was the dream of some of the sectarians during the Civil War and of the Mormons. Bellah claims that even the civil theology of Hegel "shows that the yearning for the union of Christian and citizen was still vigorous at the end of the eighteenth century" (Bellah, 1978:17).

"means specific to the state." In fact, he defines the state both as "a compulsory association which organizes domination" and, as an association which monopolizes "the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory." The modern state, Weber argues, is "a relation of men dominating men. . .by means of 'legitimate violence'" (Weber, 1919/1958:78). Religion, on the other hand, claims an authority that outweighs or transcends any kind of earthly power (Bellah, 1980a:vii). It claims to unlock the meaning and mysteries of this world, and offers an ultimate and transcendental reality. It offers, in other words, "an ultimate stand toward the world by virtue of a direct grasp of the world's 'meaning.'" A world that is apparently chaotic, arbitrary, and unjust appears, through religion, to be meaningful and ordered (Weber, 1915/1958:352).

While the church-state problem is not the focal issue it once was, religion still is "a friction point" in modern democratic states (Krinsky, 1968:3). To be sure, the tension between religion and the state, or faith and politics, almost always comes to the fore whenever legitimation is considered.[52] Bellah observes that "in no society can religion and politics ignore each other. Faith and power must always, however uneasily, take a stance toward one another" (Bellah, 1980a:vii). Obviously, the political "solutions" given to this tension are many and varied. Each society has handled the relationship of religion to the state in its own distinctive manner, as dictated by its institutions and particular historical circumstances (Krinsky, 1968:15). Yet, apparently no solution has ever brought to a 'vanishing point' the tension that Rousseau described and tried to resolve (Bellah, 1980:6). As several commentators have noted, there have seldom been periods in the history of the Western

[52] There is a whole school of thought in sociology that denies that religion has anything to do with legitimation in the modern world. Legitimation is thus linked to non-religious factors such as economic, technical and/or functional rationality (see Chapter II.5).

world that were not "wracked" with conflicts between religious authority and secular interests (Krinsky, 1968:1).

III.2 Legitimacy in Sociological Theory

Whereas the question of legitimacy is part of a long tradition of Western political thought, the rise of 'legitimacy' to the full status of a genuine sociological interest was due to classical sociology. Its clearest and most comprehensive expression is to be found in the work of Max Weber. However, the notion of legitimation which is derived from classical sociological theory, as Kokosalakis rightly notes and skilfully demonstrates, has proven to be somewhat inadequate for the analysis of political power in modern society (Kokosalakis, 1985:370).

Broadly speaking, there are two basic ways of looking at the phenomenon of legitimacy: that which views legitimate domination in terms of *belief*, and that which views it in terms of *values*. In the former case, also referred to as the "subjectivist" approach, the emphasis is placed on the *political* with a focus on the "rulers/ruled relation." Weber would be a prime example. In the latter, the "objectivist" approach, the emphasis is shifted from the political to the *socio-cultural*. The main focus is on social values (Merquior, 1980:1-3). Durkheim, Parsons, and their followers fall in line with this point of view.

From the subjectivist standpoint, the problem of legitimacy is resolved in terms of whether or not a given ruler *is believed* to be acting properly by most individuals subject to it. In other words, the subjectivist approach equates legitimacy with the "*conviction*" on the part of individuals or citizens that it is "right and proper" to obey a specific political authority. However, legitimacy has little to do with "feelings." As Merquior argues, identifying legitimacy with the "feelings of the

ruled says next to nothing about the criteria of legitimacy." The objectivist approach, as its name indicates, assumes the existence of *objective* criteria, "external to the mere floating 'conviction' of the majority." A government is legitimate only if official policies, programs, or "governmental output" are compatible with, or reflect the basic principles and values of the majority of those governed. The objective approach stresses shared values and consensus, but it also refers to the capacity of a regime to find solutions to the basic problems facing any political system. It allows, at least in theory, for the possibility of a lack of overall legitimacy whenever the society's values collide (as in a civil war), or as a result of political, ideological, or social antagonisms. In Merquior's view, Weber and Rousseau are the classic representatives or the archetypes, so to speak, of the two basic ways of looking at the phenomenon of legitimacy. "While Jean Jacques Rousseau was the main founder of what we might call the 'power theory of legitimacy,' Max Weber remains the locus classicus of the 'belief theory of legitimacy'" (Merquior, 1980:1-6).

Merquior's study suggests that the conceptualization and treatment of legitimacy in social theory is inadequate. As he notes, both approaches are flawed: the one is faced with the dilemma of how to ascribe *values* to social groups on a "reasonable empirical basis," the other, with the equally difficult puzzle of how to ascribe *beliefs*. But Merquior's concern is not only with the problem of opinion instability in survey research. He also notes the fallacy of basing legitimacy on a set of "improbable assumptions" about value-sharing in society. Both approaches, he observes, revolve around the "assumption of belief," stressing either the "psychological" side of the legitimating belief (i.e., the personal conviction that it is right and proper to obey), or its "*social* aspect" (i.e., societal values "external to the ruled's consciousness"). In other words, both make legitimacy dependent upon *believing* in the ruler's claim to legitimate authority. In so doing, neither

of them confronts the problem from the "actual political experience of legitimacy (or illegitimacy)." These weaknesses, Merquior suggests, could be overcome by conceiving legitimacy in terms of power (Merquior, 1980:1-6).

But in social theory "power has rarely been granted the centrality it deserves" (Kokosalakis, 1985). The general tendency in all sociological theories has been "to reduce power to a secondary characteristic of social life" (Giddens, 1981:49). Even in Marxism, where 'power' is a first-order concept, political power is merely the "organized power" of the propertied class for oppressing another. In *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* Marx lists several measures that, once in place, will make public power lose its political character--the most important ones being the abolition of property, the introduction of a graduated income tax, the abolition of all right of inheritance, confiscation of property of emigrants and rebels, centralization of credit, and placing the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state (1848/1978:490). To the extent that economic and material interests are considered to be the prime determinants of the polity, power is treated as a "secondary concept" (Kokosalakis, 1985:368). Indeed, in Marxist's terms, once the revolution would 'sweep away' the old conditions of production, the existence of class antagonisms would disappear, and so would political power. However, it could be argued that the elimination of an exploitative mode of production may by no means eliminate all the sources in human life that inform power. Simply put, a socialist society does not put an end to political hierarchy and political power. Ideas, whether religious, moral, practical or aesthetic, Geertz reminds us, "must be carried by powerful social groups to have powerful social effects." They have to be somehow institutionalized. "Someone must revere them, celebrate them, defend them, and ultimately impose them" (Geertz, 1973:314).

In view of the central role of power in Weber's theory of legitimate domination, Merquior's claim might seem unjustified. This is not the case, however, for despite the centrality given by Weber to the notion of power, his theory of legitimate domination is derived from his theory of bureaucracy and is entirely one-dimensional (Kokosalakis, 1985:370). Weber's work can be characterized as a comparative historical sociology centered on an attempt to explain modernity and modern 'man.'[53] He is deeply interested in the study of religious and social change. He uses the concepts of rationalization and bureaucratization to explain the process of modernization. In his view, this process has had profound implications for social, political and religious systems. The *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905/1930) represents Weber's effort to understand the effects of rationalization in the context of modern Protestantism.

For Weber, bureaucratization is domination objectified (i.e., the establishment of an impersonal social order which functions according to abstract and rational rules and regulations). Weber sees bureaucratization intimately linked with the process of "rationalization" of the modern world. "Bureaucracy has a 'rational' character: rules, means, ends, and matter-of factness dominate its bearing . . . " (Weber, 1921/1958:244). He notes that the modern world is gradually losing its sacred character to rational and efficiency-oriented explanations of reality. Functional rationality and "rationalization" imply a world defined, organized and ruled by total calculation, that is, by "calculable rules" and by "calculability of results" (Weber, 1921/1958:215).[54] In the process of

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[53] I use the term "man" to refer specifically to modern men, for, despite the fact that Weber has been characterized as "an outspoken feminist," he was not really interested in explaining modern woman at all (for claims regarding his alleged feminism, see, for example, Collins, 1986:270; Mitzman, 1969:279).

[54] Weber's unsystematic usage of the words "rational" and "rationalization" presents some difficulties. His concept of "rational" or "rationality" is, in the words of Lukes (1971:207) "irredeemably opaque and shifting," and its precise meaning often remains obscure. This problem has indeed been acknowledged by several scholars (e.g., Levine, 1981; Casanova, 1984; Kalberg, 1985, to name just a few).

rationalization the social order, originally ethically motivated and embedded in a magico-religious world, becomes detached from all ethical considerations. It becomes a 'dehumanized' world where goal attainment is based on "objective considerations" and utilitarian principles. In a successful bureaucratic organization, for example, there is no place for love, hatred or any other irrational or emotional elements "which escape calculation" (Weber, 1921/1958:216). In the end, impersonal forces come to rule over individuals. For this reason, Weber sees in bureaucratization the modern chains of "man."

Weber argues that all processes of development (including economic development) are "struggles for power." At the same time, he believes that the most fundamental "yardstick" of values in any process of development is the "reasons of state" (Weber, 1921/1958:35). As already noted, Weber defines the state as an association which organizes domination (Weber, 1919/1958:82). In his political writings, concepts such as "national power," "national interests," "national greatness," or the "state's political interests" surface over and over again. National "greatness," or the success of a nation in achieving world domination, is postulated by Weber as a valid political goal. National greatness, however, cannot be achieved without strong political leadership. Politics requires "a manly heroic ethic of daring and decisive action" (Weber, 1921/1958:155). To counterbalance the domination of politics by bureaucratic mentality, Weber resorts to the idea of a powerful state to protect the nation, and powerful and strong individuals to protect the interests of the state. It is against this framework that he discusses his theory of legitimate domination.

Weber was deeply affected by the political crisis of Germany during his time. With the defeat of Germany in WWI the nation was isolated and the Kaiser had become the "target of international scorn." The symbol of the nation (the Kaiser) had been internationally humiliated. This

he found clearly harmful and certainly hard to accept. In Weber's view, "a nation forgives if its interests have been damaged, but no nation forgives if its honor has been offended . . . " (Weber, 1919/1958:118). If the symbol of the nation was humiliated, so was the entire nation's honor damaged.

Weber attributes Germany's difficulties to a bureaucratized political structure that has prevented the efficient selection of political leaders. What Germany needs, he declared, are "responsible" leaders willing to act in politics according to the "ethic of responsibility."[55] In Weber's view, to do this a politician must be both a leader and a hero. In the political order, Weber's solution to the dilemma of modernity is an authoritarian leader, who has no personal ambition, only a passionate commitment to an impersonal cause (Weber, 1919/1958:128). As a consequence, Weber has been seen by many scholars as "an imperialist, defending the power-interest of the national state as the ultimate value" (Gerth and Mills, 1958:35).

Weber is convinced that to the degree that "magical elements of thoughts" are displaced, the march of "rationalization" will move forward. However, modernity is also pushing us backward. Indeed, the *malaise* of modernity is associated with the depersonalization and "disenchantment" of the world brought about precisely by the rationalization and bureaucratization of every aspect of our lives. Weber dislikes the modern "man" that is emerging: the "narrowed professional," "administrative official," or "political official" with no heart and little brain. He believes modernity

[55] Weber distinguishes between an 'ethic of responsibility' and an 'ethic of absolute ends.' Those who follow the former, take responsibility for *consequences.* Those who follow the latter, use "dubious means" or, at least, "dangerous" ones to achieve their ends. Whatever 'means' are used, and whatever the outcomes, are irrelevant--responsibility is taken for achieving 'ends' not for the consequences that follow.

is creating an army of docile and obedient bureaucrats. This type of individual is "a petty routine creature, lacking in heroism, human spontaneity and inventiveness" (Gerth and Mills, 1958:50).

To his rather gloomy view of modernization and rationalization, and fear of "leaderless democracy," Weber brings the concept of charisma or "gift of grace." People with charisma are "self-appointed leaders that individuals follow because they believe in their extraordinary qualities." "Heroic feats of valor and baffling success are characteristic marks" of charismatic leaders (Gerth and Mills, 1958:52). "Men do not obey [the charismatic leader] by virtue of tradition or statute, but because they believe in him" (Weber, 1919/1958:79). The heroic charismatic leader is emotionally (not rationally) driven and endowed with spontaneity, courage and personal charm. He breaks with all institutional routines--those of tradition and those subject to rational control. He is, so to speak, beyond the power-struggle, for the power that he embodies, and takes, is not acquired for his own glory but for the glory of the nation or cause. This is one form in which legitimate domination might occur. The other form of legitimate domination in the modern world is by virtue of legality. That is, "by virtue of the belief in the validity of legal statute and functional 'competence' based on rationally created rules" (Weber, 1919/1958:79). The last "inner justification" for legitimation is the "authority of the 'eternal yesterday,'" that is, traditional domination. The leader's essential legitimacy "depends upon his doing what others have done before him" (Demerath and Williams, 1969:60). In sum, in Weber's view, legitimation of political authority and political obedience is to be found in these three "pure" types: charismatic, legal, and traditional. Administrative bureaucracy represents for him the "purest type of exercise of legal domination."

Weber defines all three types of legitimate domination "by *voluntary submission* to power systems in whose validity the subject *believes*." Thus legitimate domination may rest on devotion

to the exceptional character of charismatic leaders, on respect for the law, or on the respect for the sanctity of traditions (Merquior, 1980:97-98). While Weber was well aware of the "general demise of traditionalism" in modern societies, he rejected the evolutionary view which saw the world advancing in a straight, irreversible line. Instead, he subscribed to a "'pendulum' pattern based on a recurrent oscillation between charismatic irruptions and bureaucratic expansion" (Merquior, 1980:100).

Weber's conception of legitimate domination, as Kokosalakis (1985:370) rightly suggests, "excludes in principle any evaluation of the uses of power." This means that "in the context of Weber's sociological theory of 'legitimate rule' there [is] no room for illegitimate forms of domination." Quoting Momsen, he argues that "even in his celebrated concept of charisma" as a political solution, it is difficult to distinguish between "the genuine charisma of responsible democratic leaders, as for instance Gladstone or Roosevelt and the pernicious charisma of personalities like Kurt Eisner or Adolf Hitler" (Momsen, 1974:83, 91, in Kokosalakis, 1985:370). Gerth and Mills have also noted that the concept of charisma is indeed "free of all evaluations." Charismatic leaders only have in common the fact that "people obey them because of faith in their personally extraordinary qualities" (1958:52).

In short, Weber's sociology of legitimacy is overtly centered on the relationship of the ruler and ruled. Domination is conceived as operating mainly in terms of beliefs. His theory of legitimate domination consists either in the "anatomical description" of the beliefs of the rulers in their own legitimate right to demand obedience, "as embodied in ideologies of rulership," or in the beliefs of the ruled in their leaders extraordinary qualities or "gift of grace" (Merquior, 1979:6). However, authority may not always rest with a legitimizing belief in the right of the ruler on the part

of subordinates. There seems to be a great deal of relevance to the criticism that his conception of authority and legitimation gives too much importance to systems of beliefs. Some scholars have argued that Weber's claim that authority always rests on a "belief on the part of the subordinates does not carry conviction" (Merquior, 1980:208; Selznick, 1992:271). Merquior observes that even authority may also lie "in interest, coercion, or both. No inner acceptance of the ruler's claim to rule is necessarily required" (Merquior, 1980:208). To be sure, in such cases, we are in the realm of what Weber called 'power,' which is inherently less stable as a means of social control than 'authority' which, in Weber's terms, is legitimated domination. However, several political regimes during the course of the twentieth century have enjoyed 'legitimacy' on such a basis. In any case, Weber's concern is not so much with the "wielding of authority as with its acceptance and legitimation in the eyes of the followers" (Demerath and Williams, 1969:60).

As Kokosalakis notes, it is "not just the Weberian perspective which lacks sensitivity in this area" (Kokosalakis, 1985:370). Parsons' view of legitimation and power is also "one-dimensional." For Parsons the social order is basically ruled by a set of core values which permeates all the main 'functions' of society. He conceives of power as a "generalized capacity" to accept "binding obligations," which "are legitimized with reference to their bearing on collective goals" (Parsons, 1963:237). Power is not a personal attribute, rather it is a system resource. So he sees power operative only in terms of social systems and social values, not as a relationship amongst social actors. Values, however, are "backed by power mechanisms," and institutions are often the "foci of power at the service of distinct values and interests" (Merquior, 1980:7). Parsons does not seem to consider the relationship between values and the particular social groups that are the "carriers" of those values. Power holders are believed to conform to the general values of society, and always

attempt to achieve "the goals preestablished by the total system." The fact that the structures of power may be "routinely and systematically" used for the satisfaction of personal and/or particular group goals, "even in opposition to societal interests," is not given much attention. On the contrary, those holding positions of power are deemed as relatively "benevolent, civic-minded leaders diligently doing the work of the society" (Hughey, 1983:152). Parsons, in short, tends to consider power "neutral" and those in power as merely using authority collectively delegated. This would explain why Giddens has suggested that in "Parsons' theory of power human beings appear only as 'cultural dopes'" (in Kokosalakis, 1985:371).

Finally, Kokosalakis notes that even scholars who belong to the conflict tradition, such as Dahrendorf (1959) and C. Wright Mills (1956), are guilty of the same problem--power is discussed primarily in terms of capacity (Kokosalakis, 1985:370). That is, their central focus is the *capacity* of some groups or individuals to economically or politically exploit others. In Kokosalakis' view, this is misleading because it implies that the dynamics of power struggles and power relations operate "outside" any ideological, religious, or ethical framework (1985:368).

Kokosalakis's discussion suggests that despite a wide range of variation in modern theories of legitimate domination, they all have one thing in common: the conception of legitimation as a "totally desacralized" and "demystified" social phenomenon. The "question of whether power has lost entirely its age old mystifying character" is often left unanswered or never made problematic. In other words, legitimation is conceived as "a matter of abstract, rationalized and technocratic, administrative procedures" (Kokosalakis, 1985:370, 372).

Kokosalakis stands with Merquior in finding the sociological theories of legitimation inadequate to explain the uses of power, but for slightly different reasons. He argues that Marxists,

conflict theorists, and structural functionalists alike can all be challenged because they accept the idea that the bases of legitimation in advanced societies are entirely secular, rationalist and primarily based on technical efficiency. By viewing the dynamics of modern legitimation and modern culture in entirely secular terms, they all fail to pay attention to the role religion still plays in the modern polity (Kokosalakis, 1985:372).

The issue raised by Kokosalakis, while largely true, needs some qualification. Marxist theorists have acknowledged the role religion plays in modern society as a source of 'false consciousness.' In essence, Marx's ideas concerning religion and politics can be reduced to three basic themes: religion as an illusion (compensation for the state of human suffering caused by imperfect social and political relations), religion as a symptom of alienation, and religion as opiate. At the same time, however, he was well aware that religion, its illusions and opiate nature, had to be unmasked before political action could proceed. In this sense, religion had a profound political significance. Religious consciousness was simply a reflection of material and social realities: religion was an *inverted world-consciousness.* Once these social realities were transformed, religious consciousness would fade away. Individuals would then realize that God was the projection of an idealized human nature (Marx, 1843/1978:53).

Marx believed that in Germany the critique of religion was "in the main complete." Feuerbach and others had already established that the criticism of religion was "the premise of all criticism." But, to a certain extent, Marx regarded the Young Hegelians' criticism of religion, especially Feuerbach's, as superfluous, for it addressed symptoms rather than the disease itself. For Marx religion was not the product of certain universal features of the human condition (as it was for Durkheim and, to a certain extent, for Weber). Rather, religion was the product of specifically

contingent social arrangements. In order to give up illusions, what was required was to "give up a state of affairs which need[ed] illusions" (Marx, 1843/1975:176). Political emancipation demanded the "*emancipation* of the state from Judaism, Christianity, and *religion* in general" (Marx, 1843/1978:32). In other words, Marx dismisses religion, and one can only speculate, he would have dismissed civil religion as well. This may explain why most Marxist scholars have not participated in the civil religion debate.

Concerning political legitimacy, neither Marx nor Engels attached much importance to this issue.[56] Legitimate authority presumes consent and the rightful claim to obedience or agreement. But, insofar as the bourgeoisie had usurped power and privileges, there could never be a legitimate agreement. In fact, in bourgeois society there could be no such a thing as a free, independent state possessing its own ethical basis. The state was nothing "but a machine for the oppression of one class by another." The state was, indeed, an 'executive committee' for managing the affairs of the bourgeoisie. This is the reason why under new, free social conditions, "the entire lumber of the state" would be thrown "on the scrap heap" (Engels, 1891/1978:629). Marx's critique of the state, in fact, parallels his critique of religion. Claims of autonomy and independence by the sovereign state are as illusory as religious claims of divine sovereignty.

III.3 Religion and Legitimation Today

It has been believed for quite some time in academic circles that religion is losing ground in the modern world. Theories of secularization and modernization have helped to give credence to this

[56] It is interesting to note that *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert Tucker, has no rubric bearing the name 'legitimacy' or 'legitimation.'

idea, for they have tended to downplay the significance of religion in political legitimation. Religion is often portrayed as playing no part in the legitimation of modern societies (Fenn, 1978), as having minimal legitimizing influence (Roof and MacKinney, 1987), or perhaps as playing only a minor and indirect role. Other sociologists, however, contend that there is something of a religious rebirth happening, not only in the United States, but around the world (Hamilton, 1995:193-215; Bellah, 1974c:36).

Starting perhaps a few decades ago, there have been new developments in the sociology of religion which call into question the assumptions of secularization theories (Finke and Stark, 1992; see also Hamilton, 1995, especially chapter 15). In the process several sociologists of religion have also reconsidered the importance of religion in contemporary life and have recognized the "double function" religion still plays "in the legitimation of power and privilege and in protest and opposition" of all kinds, despite its alleged decline in public life (Billings and Scott, 1994:173). That is, studies have shown the importance of religion as a "political resource," either as an emancipatory force or as an aid to the maintenance of the *status quo* (Williams, 1996:368). Berger (1967) sees religion as capable of legitimating or challenging power and privileges. In this sense, religion can be either a "world-maintaining" or a "world-shaking" force. Berger, however, is one of those scholars who seems convinced that the process of privatization is inexorably displacing religion from public life. By this he means that religious beliefs have become subjective. Since the quest for meaning is a strictly private affair, a religious world view is no longer possible (Berger, 1967:133). Not only the quest for salvation has withdrawn to the private sphere of the self, but religious institutions have become increasingly irrelevant. Luckman refers to this personal search for self-realization as the "invisible religion" of modernity (in Casanova, 1994:36). In other words, the

sacred meaning formerly given by religion to every aspect of social life "is now only a patchwork of largely privatized experiences" (Beckford, 1989:106).

However, as a result of new developments (both in theory and in praxis), traditional conceptions of legitimation (based on beliefs or value consensus) have been called into question. Legitimation is seen more in terms of "bitterly contested struggles where religion still plays a vital role," rather than in terms of societal values and beliefs (Billings and Scott, 1994:174). Scholars have noted that religion is not only involved in popular struggles, but it seems to be "embroiled in controversy." From arguments about abortion, to lawsuits over prayers in public schools, to discussions over America's military presence in the world, "religion seems to be in the thick of it" (Wuthnow, 1988:6). At the same time that religion is becoming 'political,' politics is being "reinfused with religious symbols and claims" (Billings and Scott, 1994:174). This has led some observers to note that as a result of the "symbiotic" relations between religion and politics, it is no longer easy to ascertain "whether one is witnessing political movements which don religious garb or religious movements which assume political forms" (Casanova, 1994:40).

Clearly, at the root of many of the issues in which religious groups have become "embroiled" in recent years, lies the increasingly "problematic boundary" between church authority and state authority. Due to the institutional separation between the state and church, and the tendency towards the secularization of the political order that goes with modernity, the churches can no longer rely on the state to enforce their moral claims. This tension is expressed, at least in America, in debates over such questions as whether or not the government has the right to keep religious activities out of the public school system, or whether the churches have the right to challenge the Supreme Court's position on issues like the legality of abortion. These struggles, often fought out in the

streets or in the press corridors, are mere "flash points," indicative of deeper changes in the relationship between religion, government, and society in the U.S. (Wuthnow, 1988:7).

Trends towards the politicization of religion and the religionizing of politics, together with the prominence attained by 'special purpose' religious groups on the political scene, suggest a shift away from earlier conceptions of religion as either playing no role at all, or being an "indirect" legitimator of the status quo, to one that emphasizes a "radical, combative, and active stance vis-a-vis both secular legitimation and religiously based but competing moral visions of the good society" (Billings and Scott, 1994:175). Wuthnow holds the state responsible for the growth of special groups in American religion. He argues that as the arm of the state has extended in key areas of our lives, and as other kinds of government regulations are affecting the daily lives of ordinary citizens, there has been a corresponding proliferation of special interest groups. These groups have arisen for the "express purpose of combating, restraining, or promoting certain types of government activity" (1988:114).

The religious mobilization of moral crusaders, either on the right or on the left of the politico-religious spectrum, and their efforts to legitimize or deligitimize those in positions of authority, challenge the idea that modern society is legitimized entirely in terms of functional rationality or technical expertise. Religious groups, especially in the United States, but not just in that nation, are no longer content to play an ancillary role regarding what they consider fundamental moral issues. In fact, some religious groups not only want to *influence* values or individuals' consciences, they seem determined to *change* them--even if this requires "violent activism." To accomplish their politico-religious goal and mobilize political influence, 'special interest groups' with religious concerns are increasingly playing more "by political rules rather than by religious rules" (Wuthnow,

1988:207).[57] It follows that religion, politics and morality, "once seemingly far removed, have come to be once more closely entwined" (Billings and Scott, 1994:174).

Hence, even though there is some truth to the claim that political authority is justified nowadays largely on "nonreligious" terms, there seems to be, at the same time, enough evidence indicating that religious activism has an influence on the legitimacy of "certain policies, the shape of constituencies and coalitions, levels of participation, cultural climates, and the social definitions of public and private spheres in the United States" (Billings and Scott, 1994:178). Commentators have also observed a similar blurring of boundaries between religion and politics in other parts of the world.[58]

Wuthnow (1988) notes that changes in both religious and political life have produced a profound "restructuring" or "realignment" of religion. Elsewhere (1994) he notes that the sacred, which is "deeply conditioned" by the social location in which it appears, is "produced." Wuthnow contends that if the sacred is produced, so is its public manifestation (i.e., "public religion"). As a cultural product, public religion does not simply happen. On the contrary, a variety of organizational vehicles concerned with the 'production of culture' are actively involved in its production, seeking

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[57] New Right leaders, for example, define 'morality' as essentially a public issue and tend to frame their discussion in public contexts. On the issue of abortion ("a national sin") a Moral Majority leaflet stated that those "moral Americans who still believe in decency, the home, the family, Bible morality, the free enterprise system, and all the great ideals that are the cornerstone of this great nation must rally together and make their voice heard across this land and in the halls of Congress and the White House" (in Wuthnow, 1988:213).

[58] The rise of the New Christian Right in the United States, the role of religion in countries such as Nicaragua, and the emergence of Liberation Theology in Latin America, in general, have encouraged a shift in the sociology of religion, and a re-thinking of the role religion still plays in the modern world.

to influence the beliefs and values of society.[59] Both issues (restructuring and production) are terribly important to understanding the role of civil religion in modern society. I will return to his point later in this chapter.

In sum, even in our post-industrial, post-modern age, a completely secular politics operating outside any religio-ideological context seems to be more illusion than reality. The legitimation of power in the modern state, as Kokosalakis rightly notes, while largely a matter of rational and efficient procedures, "is also a question of meaning, values and political purpose." Because power always operates in a meaningful symbolic context, it "must always be legitimized within a symbolic cultural and value laden frame of reference" (Kokosalakis, 1985:368). Symbolic power, in turn, implies "action, moral fulfilment, and authority" (Novak, 1992:30). Legitimation, thus, carries moral and ideological implications which cannot be reduced to "formal rationality" (Kokosalakis, 1985:372).

III.4 The Invisibility of Power

In the preceding discussion I mentioned that in sociological theories the linkage between power and religion has not received sufficient attention. The sociology of religion, by following the mainstream sociological tendency, has also not come "to grips with the full theoretical significance

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[59] Nineteenth century social thinkers anticipated and laid the ground for this approach (i.e., ideas, values, and beliefs do not have an independent existence--ideas originate from society). These thinkers were well aware that ideas and beliefs came about because of human action. They were also keen on demonstrating their dependence on social factors (Wuthnow, 1994:22). Marx, for example, asserted that the ruling ideas were in every epoch the ideas of the ruling class, and that religious leaders shaped the character of religious belief. Religious beliefs and ruling ideas were, in turn, products of the economic circumstances in which rulers and leaders lived (Marx, 1932/1978:172). Weber was not so much interested in the sources or causes of religious beliefs. Rather, he examined how the social role of the prophet differed from that of the priest, and how the two generated very different styles of religious thought or religious mentality. He was also interested in the ways that different social classes or groups (such as artisans and traders) became the 'carriers' of new ethical orientations (Weber, 1922/1965).

of the dialectical relationship between power, authority and religion" (Kokosalakis, 1985:368). As McGuire notes, power, although a frequently "*implicit* theme" in the sociology of religion, has rarely been treated "directly and precisely" (1983:44). It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the notion of power in the literature on civil religion also 'shines through' by its absence.[60] By not paying attention to the Rousseauan view of civil religion, experts on this issue have made virtually no attempt to see power as an essential element, perhaps the leading force of the civil religion concept. Only a small number of cross-cultural studies, often in non-western settings, have dealt with this issue, particularly when civil religion has emerged as a temporary alternative to a political crisis.[61]

Bellah interprets civil religion as setting a standard by which the nation is called to be moral and just. He argues that "the nation is righteous and to be honored only insofar as it honors the covenant" (in Selznick, 1992:481fn6.). There may be some occasional 'distortions,' or even 'corruption,' but Bellah seems to think that civil religion is generally 'upright.'[62] The American

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[60] I am referring here to power in politics or political power in a Weberian sense. That is, politics is to be understood as "only the leadership, or the influencing of the leadership, of a political association," in particular the state. Hence *politics* means "striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power either among states or among groups within a state" (Weber, 1919/1958:78).

[61] See for example, Regan (1976) for the Malaysian case; Braswell (1979) for the Iranian case; McDowell (1974) and Zeldin (1969) for the Soviet Union; Zuo (1991) for the case of the Cultural Revolution in China as a "political religion"; Takayama (1988) in the case of Japanese civil religion.

[62] Although Bellah takes a strong Durkheimian position, in this he is very close to Rousseau's ideas. Rousseau notes that the general will obligates "all members of the State without exception." Magistrates have the power as "ministers of the laws" to enforce the laws, and the "right" to use the power assigned to them. Rousseau assumes that this power is always used and directed towards the common good and public utility (Masters, 1968:190). The general will is "always upright and always tends to the public advantage." While it may be "often deceived," it is "never corrupted" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:184-185). Rousseau recognizes that if the law ceases to be legitimate people are no longer bound to obedience. Individuals in this case have the right to return to their natural freedom. In Bellah's terms, if the nation does not live up to its ideals, citizens have the right to civil disobedience. But as with Rousseau he tends to assume that civil religion is always directed towards the common good.

nation does, in his view, stand "under transcendent judgement" (Bellah, 1974:255). It follows that in Bellah's analysis political power can be effectively limited and criticized for the nation is subject to God and his judgement (Bellah, 1975:ix). In other words, he assumes that civil religion has "the capacity, or at least the potential," to challenge the authority of political leaders and institutions (Gehrig, 1981a:38). Following Bellah, the general trend of students of American civil religion has been "to affirm that civil power stands under the sovereignty of God and that the nation must judge its own acts in the light of divine righteousness" (Richardson, 1974:164).

When Bellah (1970:172) points out that civil religion "provides a transcendent goal for the political process," he is thinking about the political machinery in theological terms. Politics is approached as if ultimate moral and religious issues are at stake. Marty (1974:145) and others have called this the "prophetic" role, or dimension, of civil religion--a dimension which has a "predisposition toward the judgmental." In Bellah's terms, it is this side of civil religion "that makes possible renewal, national self-criticism, and the ability and openness to learn . . . " (Jones and Richey, 1974:14). The problem, as Demerath and Williams have noted (1985:161), is that America is understood "not as striving to understand and follow God's will, but as the very embodiment of that will."

The question to be asked is who sets the standards (apart from God) by which the nation is called to be just and righteous? Who decides if the nation is honoring its covenant or not? Moreover, what is seldom considered is the fact that the allegedly 'prophetic' capacity of civil religion may be liberating for some groups but repressive for others. It may be either innovative or supportive of the *status quo*, benefitting some and excluding others, depending largely on which 'side of the fence' one stands. One should be careful to distinguish between what Gehrig calls prophetic

"attempts" and prophetic "successes." But more than this, one should be able to ascertain who are the beneficiaries of the so-called 'successes,' and what conditions or power dynamics are at work either "facilitating or resisting prophecy" (Gehrig, 1981b:37). When scholars discuss the prophetic capacity of civil religion, not much attention is given to the "substantial gap" that may exist between "prophecy *attempted* and influence *gained*" (Demerath and Hammond, 1969:212). In other words, civil religion's "prophetic" dimension would seem to provide a rather weak and unreliable index for national self-criticism, or for understanding the shape and course of American self-judgement. It would also appear that self-criticism in American politics is a kind of vicious circle. Bennett writes: "the state, through its leaders, calls upon deity and dogma to bless actions, while the actions, in turn, are offered as proof that the state has chosen the best and most profound grounds for action" (1975:88). Bennett illustrates this point by quoting from Lyndon Johnson's speech: "Above the pyramid on the great seal of the United States it says in Latin, 'God has favored our undertaking.' God will not favor everything that we do. It is rather our duty to divine His will. I cannot help but believe that He truly understands and that He really favors the undertaking that we begin here tonight." Implicit in Johnson's address is the following message: Americans are said to be answerable to God, but their actions are believed to be agreeable to Him.

Richardson (1974:161) has suggested that linking religion or civil religion with the nation-state, or with any dimension of human life, has important consequences. First, actors or groups assigning an 'ultimate' meaning to the nation, are expressing, in a sense, "what concerns them ultimately." Second, when religion is linked with some aspect of life, ultimate reality is conceived as resembling this 'thing' or aspect of life. Jones and Richey (1974:10) have put this idea in simpler terms: "ultimacy is conferred on that human aspect and the ultimate is reconceived to resemble it."

What Richardson is trying to say is that linking religion with any social dimension has both sociological and theological implications. On the sociological side, it is a way of *constructing* (by means of symbols and rituals) an "ultimate meaning" for social and political life. On the theological side, it is a way of *modeling* "what God is and our relation to him." Simply put, it is a way of linking worldly affairs with ultimate and transcendental reality and vice-versa. So, for example,

> [a] person who identifies with a political group and its civil religion not only . . . affirms that this group has a transcendent goal and some ultimate value (the sociological aspect), but he will also tend to think that the categories of politics--sovereignty, law, justice, the state--are especially appropriate for describing ultimate reality (the theological aspect).

But, as Richardson notes, to assign a transcendent dimension to something, is also "to affirm that it is, in some way, 'true'" (Richardson, 1974:162). This becomes a serious and pressing problem, if one considers civil religion to be embedded "in the instrumentalities of government exercising real power . . . " (Rice, 1980:65).

To be sure, civil religion uses theological symbols, language, and rituals to describe, conceive, and/or legitimize politics and the political process.[63] But theological judgements do not operate in a vacuum, they have social and political relevance. If we bear in mind that civil religion tends to legitimate the political order and the use of political power in society, this can be very dangerous indeed and may have serious political implications. A nation "under God" means

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[63] Historically, as several scholars have noted, Western conceptions of natural law and justice have grown out of biblical and theological roots. This is clearly visible in the writings of John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, for example. Carl Schmitt, the theoretician of the National Socialist dictatorship in Germany in the thirties, notes that all major political concepts are "secularized versions of theological notions: constitutional monarchy corresponds to the deistic conception of God, democracy is a version of pantheism, and so forth" (in Rouner, 1986:4). Richardson, echoing this view, notes that notions such as "God as a 'sovereign,' " or, "the world as ordered by a 'law'" imply not only the use of "political categories to describe God," but also the use of "theological symbols to describe politics" (Richardson, 1974:162).

somehow that a transcendent reality is the "pusher" or "puller" of the social and political order (Marty, 1974:144). It means "a higher criterion for sovereignty than either state or people . . . " (Rice, 1980:60). Civil religion, thus, becomes normative.

What confounds the problem even more is that sacred/theological symbols can facilitate civic corruption as well as civic virtue. In fact, in particular circumstances, civil religion may even involve a nation in an ideology that gives religious sanction to very destructive aspects of social life. The latter would happen, as Bennett notes, when civil religion and its sacred symbols are consciously "manipulated by politicians to promote or conceal actions, including immoral ones, with moralistic rhetoric" (1979:106). In other words, there is always the potential danger that religious beliefs used by political authorities may exploit civil religious symbols, rituals, and ceremonies to enhance, legitimize or justify political rule. Needless to say, this is a danger not only of civil religion, but of religion proper, or of any secular ideology for that matter.

American scholars have paid little attention to this aspect of civil religion. They have been, in fact, too much concerned with the religious dimension of civil religion, and not concerned enough with its political implications. This may be explained, perhaps, in terms of Americans' strong anti-government ethic. Mead, for example, believes that persuasion, not coercion is part of the American political mentality. He argues that traditionally church-state concepts have rested on two assumptions: 1) the conviction that the proper functioning of any society depends "upon a body of commonly shared beliefs," concerning individuals and their place in the cosmos, and 2) the equally strong conviction that the only guarantee that these beliefs will be preserved "is to put the coercive power of the state behind the institution responsible for their definition, articulation, and inculcation." Mead argues that Americans, from the very beginning, adopted the first assumption

(that is, the necessity for shared basic religious ideas), but strongly rejected the second one (namely that the institutions responsible for their indoctrination and inculcation must have the coercive power of the state behind them). The essence of the American Revolution, argues Mead, and the intention of the founding fathers, was to give up coercion in favour of persuasion (in Rice, 1980:66,fn50). Huntington (1981:75), on the other hand, seems to hold a less romanticized view. Americans, he claims, "have gloried in the conspicuous consumption of wealth," but have never had a "gospel of power." This means that American power holders "must create a force that can be felt but not seen" (Huntington, 1981:34). What is at issue here is the fact that throughout their history Americans have been very much against the power of the state. I will return to this issue shortly.

Indeed, opposition to centralized power and suspicion of government is (or at least was) at the heart of the American political creed. The impact of the American Revolution, the impact of a laissez-faire Lockean tradition, and the impact of the Protestant tradition (fostering the idea of an individual relationship with God), helped sustain the American ideological commitment to a 'weak state,' and to an anti-collectivist and anti-authoritarian political order (Lipset, 1986:116). The genesis of the American nation and the genesis of its anti-state ethic are, in fact, inseparable. The religious values and beliefs of the "American Creed," which constitute the core of American national identity, are "liberal, individualistic, democratic, egalitarian, and hence basically anti-government and anti-authority in character." The essence of constitutionalism, individualism, liberalism and egalitarianism can be reduced to one thing: "freedom from government control" (Huntington, 1981:4, 15). In other words, the creed of American political life has stressed individual rights, local autonomy, and limitation of executive power (Clark, 1962:214). It is reasonable to argue that this antipathy or opposition to power has remained a characteristic of the American way of life well into

the twentieth century. Having said this, it is also reasonable to note that the power and functions of the American government have grown tremendously in the second half of the twentieth century. However, the illusion or the reality of an anti-statist ethic has obscured, perhaps, the recognition, or the possibility, that civil religion may be linked to state ideology and state power.[64] But the desire to keep the state at arms-length does not necessarily mean that the state has indeed remained uninvolved in the production of civil religion, as we will shortly see.

A further criticism that can be made is that Bellah and other scholars have seldom considered the "intensity" with which Americans believe in the basic ideals of the American Creed, and the fact that these ideals may vary "from time to time and from group to group." Huntington notes that changes in the basic set of ideals reflect mutations in the "distribution of power" in American society, and changes in the "intensity of commitments that Americans have to those ideals." He argues that American society has gone through great periods of "creedal passion" and periods of "creedal passivity" which are strongly connected with developments in American politics (Huntington, 1981:4-5).

In short, the pervasive hostility that Americans have toward centralized power combined with the moralistic component of American civil religion, may help explain why the notion of power (or the idea that civil religion may be a powerful tool) has seldom been part of the waves of controversy that have hit the American scene during the thirty-year-old debate on civil religion in America. In

[64] Huntington believes that there has not been "any comparable change in the way in which people [think] about the authority and autonomy of government." In his view, the idea of the state "as a legitimizing authoritative entity has remained foreign to American thinking" (Huntington, 1981:34-36).

fact, American scholars interested in this issue have opted to render invisible the notion of state power and its linkage to civil religion.[65]

"Americans are eminently prophets," Santayana once observed, "they apply morals to public affairs . . . " (in Huntington, 1981:67). Bellah and his followers are not the exception that confirms this rule. They too have donned the mantle of prophecy in their writings on civil religion. They have stressed the moral elements, the consensual aspect, and the religious *ethos* of the American Creed, not its political ramifications. Kokosalaki's (1985) analysis of the relation between religion, power, and legitimation in modern society is a reminder of the way civil religion, no less than religion proper, may operate in the modern world. This would suggest that civil religion does not stand "outside" power struggles. Rather, power relations operate "inside" the religious, political, and ideological context of civil religion.

Just as the notion of the political power of civil religion (or the power of the state to shape it) has been shucked off in most discussions, so has the notion that civil religion may be an ideological phenomenon closely linked to a dominant group or class. Indeed, the direct political content of the belief system of civil religion and its role as a 'political resource' (as much in the United States as anywhere else in the world) has received little notice in the theories and/or models of civil religion. The religious rhetoric and message of the civil religious discourse has been quite carefully analyzed, but the political ideology behind those messages has been submerged in the

[65] One may argue, perhaps, that civil religion itself is part of the changing process. Scholars may have disguised, consciously or unconsciously, the exercise of power and presented it as something else.

literature. Political ideology, however, can never be entirely divorced either from the structures of civil religion or from an analysis of the dynamics and distribution of power in society.[66]

Bellah, of course, is partly to blame. He nowhere considers the potential of, or possibility that civil religious beliefs are ideologies used by some groups to legitimize their domination over others.[67] Instead, he insists that American civil religion is not and "has never been . . . an ideology intended to reinforce the authority of the state or to cast a halo over institutions" (Bellah, 1976b:167).

While most authors have opted to follow Bellah's lead, a few have made a passing reference to the ideological aspect of civil religion. Hammond (1980:77) uses the notion of ideology in the context of Rousseau's model of civil religion. He argues that Rousseau intended civil religion to be an "ideology at once transcendent but focused on the nation-state" to legitimize, in a "functional" sense, the political order. Hammond is not referring to civil religions in general, but to civil religions in Rousseau's meaning of the term, which, he insists, "have not routinely developed" and are "probably quite rare."[68] Hammond's study is one of the few to clearly distinguish between a Durkheimian and a Rousseauan approach to civil religion. Hammond acknowledges that conceived in this fashion (i.e., as a "transcendental ideology") the study of civil religion "shifts some distance out of the Durkheim camp, where it has generally been" (1980a:44).

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[66] I use the notion *ideology* as understood by Williams, namely "more or less formal systems of thought that benefit a particular group or class of people, but where the ideas themselves are presented as universally true or valid" (1996:374). Implicit in this definition is the view that many groups develop ideologies. Ideology is an 'organizing principle' intended to reorder society, to regulate political understandings, and mobilize collective action.

[67] In this sense he is no different than Durkheim. As Giddens (1978:105) has rightly noted, unlike Max Weber's sociology of religion, which specifically advances the notion that religious beliefs help legitimize group interests, in the "whole of Durkheim's writings, he nowhere confronts the possibility that religious beliefs are ideologies, which help legitimate the domination of some groups over others."

[68] As mentioned before, I find myself in disagreement with Hammond's interpretation of civil religion, in Rousseau's meaning of the term. See Chapter Four.

Bennett believes that when a civil religion is "functioning normally" it is a source of "defensible public morality." By this he means that civil religion becomes a "moral basis of state action." Under its "normal functioning," civil religion *cannot* be conceived as an "outlet for political propaganda" or "factional ideology within the state" (Bennett, 1979:107). Bennett does recognize, however, that there are many obstacles preventing the "normal functioning" of civil religion (political lies, political propaganda, intimidation, diverse and competing moral claims, etc.). Under such circumstances, the rhetoric of "self-righteousness" and "public morality" may become "ideological and lead to the justification of tragic and even immoral political acts" (1979:122-123).[69] Fenn has also noted in passing, that civil religion is often reduced to an 'ideology' at the service "of political cynics" (cited in Bourg, 1976:146). For Stauffer et al. (1975:392), America's "myth of origin deprived of its transcendental meaning" has become little more than a "justificatory ideology for political power-holders and for racial and ethnic prejudice." Notwithstanding these few references, in the final analysis, the idea that civil religion must serve as an ideology to legitimize political agendas has been largely overlooked.

Civil religion, like any other cultural phenomenon, is "produced." Children learn about it in school. They are exposed to it in direct and indirect ways through civic rituals. "Resources, planning, time and effort, money, lobbying, legislation, and professional expertise are all required to maintain it" (Wuthnow, 1994:132). Civil religion as "culture" is internalized through socialization and education. Civil religion as an ideological political phenomenon is an "organizing principle" for mobilizing collective action "clothed in the universalist language of God's will and transcendent justice" (Williams, 1996:374). It is more directly linked to the state and its political

[69] This topic will be treated in greater detail in Chapters Four and Five.

officials. At the level of power dynamics, civil religious ideology, like religion proper, is used or may be used to justify the "uses, the structures and the relations" of political power (Kokosalakis, 1985:371). Observers such as Williams, for example, have found that civil religion of the "prophetic" type uses the moral authority of religion "to connect Populist principles and policies to righteousness and God's will" (1996:376).

Needless to say, civil religion is neither the most important nor the only ideological instrument of rule. The state may justify the uses of power in terms of economic relations (laissez-faire ideology), or legitimize it by reference "to the will of the people" (the social contract, liberal ideology), or it may simply revert to an ideology of "might makes right" (totalitarian or fascist ideology). What I have tried to argue in this section, or at least bring to the attention of students of civil religion, is the ideological side of civil religion, its inherent political nature, and its profound political significance. Civil religion thus conceived is far from being a cultural given at all times. It follows that the role played by those in power in its creation, dissemination, and diffusion should also be taken into consideration.

III.5 The Consensus Legacy And Its Problems

To understand the question of the relationship between civil religion and politics it is necessary to understand the socio-cultural and moral frameworks within which political power operates in modern society (Kokosalakis, 1985:368). The linkage of religion and politics, faith and power is essential for an understanding of the religio-political problem. As Demerath has argued,

church-state relationships "quickly blend into broader structural and cultural questions of religion and power" (Demerath, 1994:107).[70]

As indicated above, the role of religion in the American political system has been examined quite carefully and covers an extensive literature (Jelen, 1995:271). Empirical studies of religion's involvement in political life are also numerous (Wilson, 1996; Jelen, 1993; Billings and Scott, 1994; Morris, 1984; Hunter, 1991). Scholarly interest in the New Christian Right in recent years indicates that the relationship between religion and politics is still a "contentious issue" in American politics. As Jelen notes, religious beliefs have always been "essential underpinnings of the American political culture" (1995:271). However, the role of civil religion in American politics has not received a parallel attention. On the contrary, studies of civil religion as a "political resource" are practically non-existent.

To be sure, the relationship between religion and politics is at the heart of Bellah's thesis on civil religion. In his view the essence of civil religion is the "religio-political problem" (1980a:vii). The political 'problem,' however, has been minimized and obscured by the adoption of Durkheim's integrationist theory. The classic structural functionalist tradition delineated by Durkheim, and adopted by Bellah and others, basically views the question of social and political order (legitimation and integration) in terms of consensus. As a logical consequence, civil religion appears to be

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[70] Throughout history, religious wars and religious persecution have had a lot to do with power and little to do with faith. For example, behind the waves of persecutions of Christians by the Roman authorities lied the threat and challenge that Christianity posed to the legitimacy of the Roman Empire. Christians were persecuted not for "being godless," but rather for being "irreverent and defiant of the sacrality and authority of the Emperor." In fact, the growth of early Christianity from a "small millenarian movement to a universal church by the 4th century is incomprehensible outside the dialectic of religion and power" (Kokosalakis, 1985:369). On the other hand, once the Roman Empire was Christianized, "the Christian mission was changed into a state mission involving the expansion of the Imperium Romanun." The Reformation has also been related to the attitudes and allegiance of local princes and lords to Papal authority and power. Likewise, the great "missionary zeal" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been linked to European colonialism and its expansion of world markets (Moltmann, 1986:51).

operating in a cultural environment where conflict and strife are minimized. But clearly, civil religion is a far more complex phenomenon than the integrationist approach supposes. By taking only a partial insight into the nature of civil religion, consensus theorists have been unable, or unwilling, to conceptualize civil religion as a phenomenon subject to political manipulation and control. While civil religion may justify and support the sentiments that give cohesion to a given society, it may also be the expression of those values and beliefs that predominate because they are supported by the most powerful and influential groups in that society.

In any case, the harmony generated by civil religion in America is less solid than most authors are willing to accept or even recognize. This is not to say that the main theorists of civil religion naively believe in the "American dream," or naively assume that all Americans speak with one voice. Civil religion is postulated to exist and, perhaps, be needed, because the U.S. does actually experience internal differences and tensions. It is, nonetheless, supposed to help bond people together despite their differences.

Bellah has recognized that American civil religion has a "different relationship" to the republican and liberal heritages--two "profoundly antithetical" traditions which are part and parcel of American social and political life (Mathisen, 1989:140). Yet, Bellah still insists that republicans and liberals "may differ in their social programs but they do not thereby necessarily differ in their civil religions" (1976a:155). A few scholars have acknowledged that American civil religion has been "resilient, episodic, and dualistic" (Mathisen, 1989:40). Wuthnow points to the existence of religiously-based "conservative" and "liberal" visions of America that provide conflicting senses of its destiny and mission. Indeed, Wuthnow claims that these two visions are so frequently at odds on everything that they "appear to have become differentiated along a fracture line." Each side

sees itself as the repository and defender of higher moral principles (Wuthnow, 1988a:254). These two visions are "theological opposites and parallel those of priest and prophet, or republican and liberal" (Mathisen, 1989:140). Again Bellah disagrees. In his view, there may be "several public theologies, but only one civil religion" (1976a:155).

Americans certainly have different understandings of reality. Debates over abortion, homosexuality, pornography and other socio-moral issues are increasingly explained as the result of a "culture war" in American society. Disagreements over such issues are more than mere cultural conflicts about opposing values. Rather, they are struggles "to achieve or maintain the power to define reality"(Hunter, 1991:52). The American nation is depicted as "two polarized" groups with radically different conceptions of their society and its morality. These two world views have so very little in common, that some scholars believe they are "incommensurable." Hunter suggests that the struggle between "orthodoxy" and "progressivism" in the U.S. is creating a new kind of societal coalition, which is bringing together different people, regardless of their religion, social class or racial group (Jelen, 1995:276). But since conflicting world views imply profound and incompatible differences which seem to be non-negotiable through normal democratic procedures, culture war theorists believe that this 'war' is also "non-resolvable" (Evans, 1996:16). Jelen notes (1995:276) that one of the "first casualties" of the culture war "is likely to be political civility." We have seen examples of such loss of civility in the U.S., particularly amongst protesters in front of abortion clinics.

It seems apparent, therefore, that there is "more than one vision of American history and experience that Americans never may perceive with a single eye" (Mathisen, 1989:140). Marty takes a more radical view and argues that there may be "as many civil religions as there are citizens"

(1974:143). Elsewhere he claims that civil religion is the "faith of only some citizens . . . [thus] it merely adds one more 'denomination' to an already crowded religious map" (Marty, 1976:195).

Vincent Harding, an African-American scholar claims that "civil religion is a repressive WASP construct, used to locate the black outside the approved realm" (in Marty, 1974:143). Likewise, Thompson (1971:268), while claiming that civil religion can be purged of its "perversions" and "distortions" and led back to its original republican ideals, admits nonetheless that it has often been in alliance with racial prejudice and discrimination. He writes,

> . . . the religion of the Republic has been idolatrous, substituting homage to the god of racial supremacy for loyalty to the one true God. Believing in a humane creed, white Americans have systematically oppressed and brutalized black Americans. Professing an inclusive creed, whites have carefully excluded blacks from full and equal participation in our society. Confessing a just creed, whites have rarely extended equal justice to blacks. Honoring a tolerant creed, whites have denied blacks the decision-making power that could affect the character of our institutions and better their competitive position in society.

Thompson laments, in fact, that Americans have restricted civil religion "solely to their own kind" and have "converted it into an arrogant white Americanism" (1971:270). This view has been echoed by others non-WASPS who have pointed out that civil religion, "at least the current academic version of it, is not so neutral as its designators would have it; it is a reflection of a WASP apprehension of a world" (Marty, 1974:144).

By emphasizing one overarching unity binding all Americans to the 'American Way of Life,' scant attention has been given to "America's neglected variety," that is, to groups not wholly receptive to civil religion, such as Blacks, Indians, Mexican-Americans, Appalachians, etc. who may

have their own self-consciousness and may not be part of the "dominant style" (Novak, 1992:129). Novak is right when he argues that in America there are "cultural traditions" that have never been fully integrated into the national way of life, and "many regions" that have been inadequately represented in "national consciousness and national symbolism" (1992:307). It may be more instructive, he adds, to identify several civil religions, rather than one overarching belief system to which all Americans subscribe. Civil religion can then be viewed as a well-institutionalized belief system, but also as a potpourri of different "cultural traditions and resources that have not yet been fully integrated into the national way of life." To "employ these two sense," Novak writes, is to view the civil religion of America as "still in process and in tension, to view it as a national self-understanding not yet adequate to the nation's full experience" (1992:129). Novak's remarks seem to suggest that the "tension" is produced because new and excluded groups have not *yet* been socialized or have not *yet* accepted the American Way of Life. In this sense, civil religion will always be in process and tension as new and permanent waves of immigrants enter the United States.

This aspect of American life has been definitely downplayed in the literature. The tendency has been to refer to the American 'society' or 'nation' as if it were a homogeneous entity. Samuel Huntington has made a distinction between what he calls the "one, the two and the many" visions of American self-understanding. [71] Theorists of civil religion have tended to take only 'the one'

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[71] This is not really surprising. Huntington, in his book *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony* (1981), argues that the "cognitive dissonance" or the gap between the ideal America and political reality has received little attention in the traditional theories of American political thought. In a section entitled "The One, the Two, and the Many" Huntington discusses the structural paradigms of American politics. Theories of "the One" are based on the belief that a broad consensus "exists and has existed" in the United States on basic political and cultural values and belief. Hence, the values embedded in "the American Creed," since the earliest days of the nation, have "served as a distinctive source of American national identity." "The Two" accounts refer to class-conflict theories--the tension between the haves and have not, between the powerful and the powerless, between entrepreneurs and proletariat. So, the key to understanding American identity is the conflict between classes. Finally, theories of "the Many" hold that the central feature of American politics and self-understanding is competition among different interest groups.

vision (i.e, the belief that a broad moral consensus exists and has existed in the United States on some basic politico-religious values), and not given enough consideration to other versions of American identity.

But the idea of a broad 'universal' consensus seems to be an ideal without reality. Individualism, liberalism and utilitarianism have, to a certain extent, diminished if not destroyed the basis of a common life and consensus. As Demerath and Williams (1985:163) have noted, and as I have tried to demonstrate, "it is doubtful whether America ever existed as an ideological whole." While the social cohesion of Puritan New England may have existed (even this may be called into question), it is clear, particularly after World War II, that as America grew in social, political, religious and economic complexity, it also grew in terms of "dissensus" and conflict. What we find in America now is an "uneasy coexistence of splintered groups differing as to race, ethnicity, economic position, and, of course, religion" (Demerath and Williams, 1985:163-164).

Indeed, journalistic accounts portray American society as so polarized, so fragmented, so full of tension that one gets the impression that America is cursed with a quasi-civil war rather than blessed with a common civil religion. As one scholar writes, American society has become too "loosely bounded to support a coherent canopy of meaning." Rather, the "American mosaic" has come to "resemble the fractured vision of cubist art" (Demerath and Williams, 1985:164). Markoff and Regan suggest that perhaps what Bellah takes to be American civil religion is an "effective force" for only a limited though influential sector of the population (Markoff and Regan, 1982:333).

John Wilson, a professor of theology, suggests that the era of the American way of life has reached its final port--it has come to an end for there is no longer a "recognizable spiritual ethos" in American culture. He notes that from mid-century there has been a "decisive departure" from the

long tradition of American society centered in a "common religion which was based on the Judeo-Christian tradition." This tradition, or perhaps this common religion, no longer exists (1986:118).

This section calls into question, once again, the cohesiveness attributed to civil religion. The image of civil religion in America as a *canopy* of shared values, operating exclusively in terms of consensus and social cohesion turns attention away from the role that civil religion plays in defining (or obscuring) national self-understanding; stabilizing (or upsetting) social and national expectations, its sense of destiny and mission; maintaining (or undermining) social values and beliefs; strengthening (or weakening) social consensus; relieving (or exacerbating) social tensions.[72] Reducing civil religion to only one side of the equation also means reducing its capacity as an analytical tool, reducing the "intellectual compass" (to use Geertz's phrase) within which analyses may be conducted, both in the U.S. and in comparative or cross-cultural frameworks.

III.6 Civil Religion: Its Agents and Structural Support

The reader should be reminded that Bellah and his followers insist that civil religion, at least in America, is totally independent of both church institutions and state institutions, but serves nonetheless to legitimize the political order. This section challenges this claim.

We have already seen that as an 'idea system' the American creed has dominated the political process and has shaped American political life. Even Bellah recognizes that "politicians" have carried "the burden" of American self-interpretation (Bellah, 1978:23). I have also noted that ideas have neither an independent existence nor do they operate in a vacuum-- they are 'produced,' and

[72] I owe the idea of these contrasts to Clifford Geertz, who uses them in the context of the role ideologies play either in "defining or obscuring," "maintaining or undermining," "strengthening or weakening," social norms, tensions, etc. (1973:203).

used, to promote and legitimate particular social or political visions. The fact that civil religion can be perceived as a cultural phenomenon does not rule out the possibility that it may be an important part of the political machinery. But one has to look elsewhere--history, philosophy, theology, political science, or to publications outside the United States--to find the linkage between civil religion and political uses/manipulation of civil religion.

Sheldon Ungar, a Canadian scholar, for example, has explicitly shown the interaction between civil religion and politics in the United States. Ungar (1991) eloquently examines the relationship between civil religion and politics, in the context of the nuclear arms race, before the collapse of the communist bloc. His study suggests that the United States generated a clearly defined civil religious ideology to justify American nuclear monopoly and policies. Military superiority, Ungar notes, came to be viewed as a "sacred trust," the result of the United States "uniqueness" and special "destiny." His study shows how elements of civil religion were employed to legitimate the American arms race, and how the civil religious rhetoric was particularly evident after the American faith in their technological superiority was shattered by the Soviet launching of Sputnik on October 4th, 1957. The American humiliation and "moral panic" that followed, Ungar suggests, were somehow mitigated by a state ideology promoting public support "for almost anything in the name of national security." State-funded and state-managed research and development, standing in direct contradiction to the American tenets of a liberal economy, were justified in the name of technological superiority. Ungar persuasively demonstrates how this state ideology was presented in "metaphysical" terms, promising something unique: to restore the U.S. special moral and historical role, to defend and dictate the values of democracy and the free market to nations around the world. Ungar concludes that a complex of civil religion ideology, political power and

legitimation informed the stance of the American state against communism around the world. In short, he explicitly demonstrates that civil religion was used, during this period, as a political resource.

Likewise, Bennett reminds us that the United States opened its arms to the twentieth century with the annexation of the Phillippines: "the military extermination of Filipino independence fighters was, for many in America, almost a holy obligation." He goes on to quote a speech delivered on the floor of the United States Senate at the time of the invasion. The Senator in question claimed that "God made us master organizers of the world . . . of all our race. He has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the redemption of the world." Civil religion, Bennett concludes, became a powerful tool for the justification of the war (1979:123).[73] The political use of civil religion has also been noticed by Novak (1992) with reference to the breakdown of American political legitimacy during the Vietnam era and the Watergate crisis. As Bennett tells us, and as Novak's description of American policy during Vietnam suggests, during crises of legitimacy the state adopts through its leaders a "perverse form of self-legitimation in which all state actions are virtuous since the state is seen as the source of virtue" (Bennett, 1979:129). Under such circumstances, dissent regarding government policies is often interpreted as questioning the very essence of the nation.

Novak attributes the "moral self-righteousness" of government institutions and political officials to their easy access to the "trappings" of civil religion. Especially in times of stress and

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[73] The power of the American presidency can be enhanced as a result of wars (Gulf war, Cold war, any war) and the needs of "national security." Civil religion's most important ritual ceremonies and state holidays are "remembrances of glorious battles and its courageous dead soldiers." It is "not mere coincidence," Richardson argues, that the "great American leaders have been generals and 'war presidents'" (Richardson, 1974:174).

crisis, national self-definition in America tends to be expressed in terms of a religiously-based language. Insofar as the president has the greatest access to the symbols of government, and since he gains power by the manipulation of those symbols, the president has "power over reality." He has what Novak calls "symbolic power." This view has been echoed by a few other scholars who acknowledge that American political leaders and political officials have enormous access to the symbols of office and mythologies of the nation, influencing thus the "production" of civil religion (Novak, 1992:259; Edelman, 1964:73).[74]

The public school system provides another basis for questioning the idea that an independent and highly differentiated belief system exists in America. It is interesting to note that the same scholars who claim that civil religion in America is completely separated from the state, stress the importance of schools as providers of a context for the "cultic celebration of civic rituals" (Bellah, 1967:14). Bellah and others, however, have tended to see the public school system as "neutral" in its effort to promulgate national unity and a non-sectarian morality. But the role of public schools as a powerful instrument for the indoctrination of American civil religion cannot easily be dismissed. The public school system not only provides structural support to perpetuate the culture and its religious elements, but, to a large extent, functions as a "direct institutionalization" of American civil religion. In fact, the public schools in the U.S. have been recognized "as the Durkheimian church of the public religion in America" (Wilson, 1979:127). Hammond, who agrees with the idea that American civil religion is fully independent from church and regime, claims at the same time that civil religion in the U.S. is "both parent and child to the public school" (Hammond, 1980a:75; 1969:383).

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[74] See Wilson (1979), especially Chapter Three "The Religious Language of American Presidents."

But the state is not entirely "neutral" when it comes to public education. Rather, "it is active and even coercive in enforcing a national, homogenous 'American way of life,' often in its most chauvinistic and benighted form" (Novak 1992:303). The public education complex is, in fact, "linked directly to government," and it is central to the socialization of succeeding generations (Wilson, 1979:12). This means that the state uses (or at least may use) civil religion to socialize students to the dominant norms and values of American society, and to foster or speed the integration of students into the wider society (Gamoran, 1990:246). However, as far as I can tell, only Gamoran's article "Civil Religion in American Schools" (1990) has directly dealt with the role public schools play in producing and transmitting American civil religion. The lack of attention to the way civil religion is 'produced' through the public school system, constitutes yet another serious flaw in civil religion theorizing.

Last, but not least, American civil religion has "resided significantly" not only in the educational system, but in the legal system as well--both institutions being its "major civil agents" (Hammond, 1974, especially Chapters 3, 6 and 8). The law marks out in explicit form "the range of life styles" appropriate to, and acceptable in the American culture. In a less differentiated culture/society these concerns might be religiously-based. In the U.S., the boundary-setting task is a social role played by the law. The American legal tradition, in turn, is closely tied to the "political matrix" of American society. So much is this the case that it is "conventionally identified as a branch of the government" (Wilson, 1979:130-132).

In short, several institutions, associated with the government would seem to provide structural support, and serve as "carriers," for the maintenance of civil religion in America. Civil religion has a place "in such 'civic' arenas as schools, public buildings, national holidays, and other

regime symbols" (Jelen, 1995:274). In other words. civil religion is (and has been) inextricably bound up with the educational, political and legal interests of the American experience. If this is the case, how can we consider it completely separated from the state?

This should not be taken to mean that civil religion is always manipulated. I am not necessarily arguing that the legitimizing ideology of state institutions inevitably produces "false consciousness." It is not civil religion *per se* that produces distorted communication. Rather, it is the use and, specifically, the political use of civil religion that may produce false information, especially when certain political agendas are presented as universally 'true' or valid, but do not constitute, what Parsons calls "a balanced account of the available truth" (Parsons, 1959:25, in Geertz, 1973:199). Civil religion has both cultural and political influence. As Herberg notes, it may be at times "a noble religion, celebrating some very noble civic virtues" (Herberg, 1974:86). However, while it is true that its influence may be morally neutral, it is no less true that in some circumstances it may also be morally corrupt. I will return to this issue in Chapter Five.

Summing up, the preceding discussion calls into question the belief that there is a highly independent civil religion in America. In fact, the central argument has been to demonstrate that not even in the United States is civil religion totally separate from the state. This means that civil religion in America does not fit the model of a "fully differentiated" civil religion, as Coleman (1969:69) and others have claimed. As Wilson has noted, on the basis of a structural analysis of American society, it does not appear that there is strong evidence to support this claim. I agree with his further comment that it is "remarkable" and surprising how little attention students of civil religion have devoted to this subject (Wilson, 1979:132, 140). Civil religion in the United States, as much as anywhere else in the world, may be used (and has been used) by political institutions as

a political resource. As an expression of a particular ideology, a particular regime, or a particular group, civil religion may have varying political goals. In the next chapter I examine how it has been used as a conscious tool of political manipulation--for legitimation purposes, to facilitate national policies, political programs, or even political propaganda--outside the U.S.

Chapter IV

State-Directed Civil Religions in Comparative Perspective

While Bellah's initial article referred specifically to the United States, he did not limit the applicability of the concept solely to American society. However, the concept has been used principally in the U.S., has had a distinctively American flavour, and has been analyzed, discussed and debated almost exclusively in American terms (Markoff and Regan, 1982:334).[75] We have already seen that in the United States civil religion has been portrayed as a cohesive force, which helps achieve national goals, reaffirms common moral values, and fosters social and cultural integration. But we have also seen that the cultural cohesion it allegedly reflects has been exaggerated, for it is neither as solid, nor functioning as well, as its more "idealistic" proponents have portrayed it (Demerath and Williams, 1985:155). The comparative literature that is presented in this chapter challenges some basic assumptions underlying the American usage of the term and demonstrates that civil religion is both a cohesive and a disruptive force in society.

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[75] Bellah has made a passing reference to Judaism and Islam (1968:391), to France (1976:155), and to England where he claims that civil religion goes "back at least to Shakespeare and Milton" (1968:389). He has compared the Japanese and American cases (1980d), and has discussed civil religion in Italy in a more detailed fashion, describing it "as a land not of one religion" but of five different cases of civil religion (1980c:86-118). Hammond has compared the "conditions" for civil religion in the United States and Mexico (1980a). Markoff and Regan have compared post-Revolutionary France and contemporary Malaysia (1982).

The structure of this chapter is as follows: 1) It begins with an examination of Hammond's (1980a) views on civil religion, in the Rousseauan meaning of the term. Hammond's otherwise excellent article reveals an inadequate understanding of Rousseau's theory, for he does not consider Rousseau's "transcendent ideology" the "handmaiden" of the state. This clarification is fundamental to understanding why Rousseau's ideas concerning civil religion may be easily 'distorted,' and used or abused by politicians or authoritarian political systems. 2) This is followed by a discussion of sacred and secular civil religions *a la Rousseau*, in different societies, and at different times. 3) I then turn to an examination of the notion of "archaic" and "modern" types of civil religion. Bellah and others have argued that the development of civil religions follows an evolutionary line which parallels the stages of religious evolution. According to Bellah's evolutionary scheme, archaic civil religions, where the sacred and the political are fused, are relegated either to developing nations or to societies in 'lower' stages of religious evolution, while "modern" types are thought to be representative of advanced societies. It is my contention, however, that what he calls the "full-fledged archaic solution" to the religio-political problem is characteristic of modern authoritarian regimes wherever they appear. In such cases, the civil religious rhetoric is appropriated by political leaders and used for specific instrumental political goals. Here, I advance the thesis that civil religion may be best understood as a continuum, ranging from civil religion as *culture* (the Durkheimian "civil" approach) to civil religion as *ideology* (the Rousseauan "political" approach). 4) The chapter ends with a brief examination of Casanova's claim that "public religions" at the state level are incompatible with modern societies, modern individual freedoms, and modern differentiated structures (Casanova, 1994:219). When Casanova argues that such religions are "unlikely to reappear in the modern world" (for the modern state no longer "needs" religious

legitimation), he fails to consider state-directed civil religions. It is for this reason that I have included his ideas on this topic here.

IV.1 Rousseau and Hammond

In his article, "The Conditions for Civil Religion: A Comparison of the United States and Mexico," Phillip E. Hammond (1980a), a prominent figure in the literature on civil religion, and, as mentioned earlier, one of the few scholars who makes a clear distinction between the Durkheimian and Rousseauan traditions, takes the position that civil religion, in Rousseau's meaning of the term, is independent of both church and state. Hammond claims that Rousseau "*seems to suggest* the most fully developed civil religion relies exclusively on neither the church nor the state but to a significant degree at least counts on independent vehicles for its support" (Hammond, 1980a:45; emphasis added). Hammond thus argues that Rousseau's civil religion, in order to exist and survive, needs "independent organizational vehicles to 'carry' it" (1980a:58). This means that civil religions, of the Rousseauan variety, depend "upon certain social conditions" to develop. Neither church nor state but an independent belief system has to succeed in monopolizing "God talk," in adopting a theological rhetoric, and in providing an ideology "by which ultimate meaning is bestowed upon national life." In other words, development of a Rousseau-type civil religion depends upon the existence of a belief system, capable of merging both civil and religious ideological forces, and able to succeed in holding the "balloon strings" of civil religion. Hammond insists that civil religions, in Rousseau's meaning of the term, have not "routinely developed." Rather, they are "quite rare" (Hammond, 1980a:77). He notes that the types of "political religions" found in some developing nations have "little in the way of any 'theology' *independent of the state*

[so], they are not fully civil religions in Rousseau's meaning of that term" (Hammond, 1980a:44; emphasis added). Hammond insists that when Rousseau coined the term *civil religion* his intention was to "harmonize" religion and politics and find a solution to the problem of religious decline. His answer was the creation of a transcendent ideology that was to be "the handmaiden of neither the church nor the state" (Hammond, 1980a:77).

Hammond, however, appears to be ambiguous on this issue. It is not always clear whether he is referring to a civil religion that is closely linked to the state or a phenomenon that is totally independent of it. In a different article, published the same year, he asserts that for Rousseau "civil religion is a sensible thing for leaders to create and encourage." This, he notes, is contrary to Durkheim's version of civil religion, where it is conceived as emerging spontaneously out of social life itself (Hammond, 1980c:138). What leaders, one is tempted to ask? Political leaders are the ones who, to use his metaphor, hold the "balloon strings" of civil religion. Political leaders frequently use solemn occasions and public forums for the transmission of civil religion themes, language, values, etc. Often political institutions and public rituals become "agencies for public indoctrination rather than means of exploring principled public sentiment" (Bennett, 1979:129). Leaders, in fact, have "official access" to political and religious symbols and to the "structural conveyances" of the political platform with which to "cloak and transmit them" (Bennett, 1975:88).[76] Moreover, Hammond acknowledges that Rousseau in the *Social Contract* "discusses several means for 'strengthening the constitution of the State,' and it is in this context that he introduces the notion of civil religion, an aid in governing" (1980a:43). If Rousseau's intention is to 'strengthen the

[76] From the moment Bellah published his famous article, and argued that what politicians say on solemn occasions should be taken seriously, political speeches and official documents have been taken as an indicator of civil religion.

constitution of the state,' how can civil religion, as he devised it, be independent of it? Finally, Hammond claims that in the United States there exists a civil religion "of the sort Rousseau urged": that is, a transcendental ideology independent of both church and state. "All the necessary conditions" for an independent civic faith to emerge were present from the very genesis of the American nation (republican morality, biblical faith, liberalism, and religious pluralism). This amalgam provided a fertile soil for the development of civil religion in its highest form--a fully differentiated civil religion. In the next few paragraphs he notes that "this enabled the church in America to relinquish its monopoly on holding the string of the religion balloon and . . . enabled government officials to grab it" (1980a:66). It seems quite puzzling to me to argue simultaneously that American civil religion is an idea system totally independent of both church and regime and affirm, at the same time, that government officials "grab the balloon strings" of civil religion. For it is the responsibility of political leaders, he says, to "create and encourage" the civil religious ideology. If civil religion is the construction and expression of political leaders, how can it be independent of the political system?

In my view, Hammond betrays a profound misunderstanding of Rousseau, for in a full Rousseauan sense, civil religion is a state-imposed religion.[77] In fact, Rousseau's civil religion cannot be conceived independently of the nation-state. Insofar as there is a civil religion of a Rousseauan type, it cannot but be established by the state. Civil religion as understood by Rousseau is a *political religion* to be fixed and dictated by the state, for the state. Rousseau not only suggests this, but clearly advocates it. Indeed, for Rousseau, civil religion, whose principles he treated as

[77] This, in opposition to a Durkheimian type of civil religion which can manifest itself at a different levels (group, local, regional, national, state, etc.)

sacred, was to be *imposed* upon its citizens. Such being the case, civil religions of the type Rousseau recommended are not so rare; they are "routinely" found in authoritarian regimes, and may be found in democratic systems as well.

As far as I know, the idea that the most fully developed civil religions rely on neither church nor state, was suggested by Bellah in his initial formulation, and advanced by Hammond (1980a) and Coleman (1969), but not by Rousseau. After several careful readings of Rousseau's chapter on civil religion, one is hard pressed to find any such "suggestion." Rousseau does not even suggest "independent vehicles" to carry it.

Hammond may be right in arguing that any ideology requires "institutionalization" and a set of "carriers" to promote it. For Rousseau, the carrier was to be embodied in the state. The state "would become the church," and the tenets of faith would be nothing less than a "statist orthodoxy" (Novak, 1992:123; Neuhaus, 1986:98). Civil religion, as an instrumental political device, was specifically designed to "guarantee citizens' loyalty to a contingent social order" (Wilson, 1971:17). What Rousseau named *civil religion* was, in fact, nothing more than a theory of a *political religion* necessary for the support of the state; or, as Hammond recognizes, at least one needed to "strengthen" its constitution. Its purpose was the enforcement of civic responsibility, essential for the maintenance of social stability and order (Wilson, 1971:14)

Now, the danger of coercion looms large in Rousseau's account of civil religion--a fact which has received no attention in the sociological literature on civil religion. The task of the legislator, Rousseau writes, is to change human nature, to transform each individual "into part of a greater whole." Rousseau is quite specific about this: the legislator must "remove man's own forces" and give him "new ones alien to him" so as to make him reliant on the community as a whole. "The

more completely these natural resources are dead and annihilated," the more likely he is to embrace the general will.[78] Thus, "if each Citizen is nothing and can be nothing, except in combination with others, . . . one can say that legislation has attained the highest possible point of perfection" (Rousseau, 1762/1984:37-38).

Rousseau entrusts the legislator with an authoritarian, and potentially coercive task--that of "transforming" human nature, to mould the morals of the people, to make them virtuous citizens, and to orient them toward the good of society. The sovereign is to determine "social sentiments" which are essential for being both a "faithful subject" and a "good citizen" (Rousseau, 1762/1973:276). From this point of view, the 'highest point of perfection' of civil religion and its most powerful contribution to the modern nation-state, is the creation of a "specific pattern of social relations" and political obligations which every citizen is forced to embrace. Its critical contribution is to civic behaviour" (Bennett, 1979:111; Wilson, 1971:14). Rousseau's concern, in short, is civic responsibility, and respect for the contract and its law.

As discussed in Chapter One, Rousseau allows citizens the right to private opinions, as long as opinions and beliefs have no political implications. For, it is only with "reference to morality, civic duties, and responsibilities to others that the dogmas of civil religion concern the state" (Wilson, 1979:160). But, the tension between the individual and the citizen which is present in his work appears once more, and so does the danger of repression. Rousseau asserts that civil and theological intolerance are inseparable for "it is impossible to live at peace with people whom we believe to be damned; to love them would be to hate God . . . It is absolutely necessary to reclaim

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[78] Civil religions of the type Rousseau encouraged are intended to introduce change in the "normative order" requiring individuals to change their "moral" nature. The "ultimate ends of the state and the moral aims are one" (Apter, 1963:90).

them or to punish them" (1973:276-277). Religion, thus, is a private and acceptable thing as long as it does not impinge on the security and the stability of the state. Here is the "social location" in which the tenets of civic faith will manifest themselves (Wilson, 1979:160). Non-acceptance of the 'purely civil profession of faith' could mean exile or even death. Rousseau insists that the sovereign should "fix the articles" and "banish from the State" whoever does not believe in them.

Rousseau's concern is essentially instrumental: how can religion be used for the benefit of the community? In Rousseau's scheme, the state may even invade the religious realm to lay down rules or prescribe beliefs as long as they will affect the community. The political-religious relationship is thus conceived in terms of "political behavior as derived from beliefs" rather than in terms of "functions or values." It should be stressed, however, that civil religion thus conceptualized "does not preclude understanding society as sacred or cultural values as the means to deeper social cohesion." (Wilson, 1979:160-161).

This understanding of civil religion is not unique to Rousseau. Rather, it is part of an ancient heritage. It may be traced back to "the imperial roman program" where a variety of religious ideologies were tolerated with "the critical test or proof being expression of allegiance to the imperial cult." Rousseau's civil religion, like the roman cult, was developed and directed toward the achievement of political ends (Wilson, 1979:161). As an established doctrine, its "test of orthodoxy" is not so much *faith* but *civic behaviour*, so no "delinquent under its reign will be punished for being impious, but just for being unsociable" (Merquior, 1979:37).

It is not so difficult to understand why a civil religion of this type may be fraught with danger or, with what Hughes (1980:78) calls "demonic potential," particularly if it emerges in non-democratic societies. Rousseau's notion that civil religion consists of collective civic faith and his

dreadful suggestion that someone should be exiled or eliminated for showing anti-social behaviour (lack of civic faith), deserves more serious attention. This is particularly true when we consider the tragic consequences of several political regimes of the twentieth century which seem to have put into practice Rousseau's maxim (Giner, 1993:31). Indeed, history chronicles, as we all know, many places where the deadly horrors of such "political religions" have been found. Political dissidents declared mentally ill, assassinated or just simply 'disappeared' have been common occurrences in modern totalitarian regimes all over the world. Dissidents' anti-social behavior is often no more than a refusal to accept the demands of the civil religion of their day.[79]

Hence, contrary to Hammond's claim, civil religions of the type Rousseau encouraged are not so difficult to find. Civil religions are means of making "religious ideas and values" operative in society (Rouner, 1986:1). But they are also means of making the polity acquire a sacred character. So, civil religions *a la Rousseau* may appear under different forms and varieties, such as theocracies, political messianism, sacred authoritarianism, totalitarianism, and secular or religious nationalism.

Indeed, cases of civil religion *a la Rousseau* are to be found in revolutionary regimes, such as revolutionary France (Demerath and Williams, 1985:155; Markoff and Regan, 1983:344), Fascist Italy (DeGrazia, 1881; Gregor, 1969) and Nazi Germany (Moltmann, 1986), Franco's Spain (Stevens, 1975), Pinochet's Chile (Cristi and Dawson, 1996), Brazil during the revolutions of 1930 and particularly of 1964 (De Azevedo, 1979), and China (Zuo, 1991; Demerath, 1994), as well as State Shinto in Japan, from 1868 to 1945 (Demerath, 1994:114; Coleman, 1969:71), and in Marxist-

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[79] For an excellent analysis of the breakdown of democratic regimes in the context of Europe and Latin America, see Linz and Stepan (1978). The rise of fascism in Italy, the national socialist takeover in Germany, the tragic consequences of the breakdown of democracy in Spain, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, and some other less well-known cases are carefully examined.

Leninist regimes (Luke, 1987: McDowell, 1974).[80] But "tendencies" to use civil religion as Rousseau understood it are also found in democratic societies.

IV.2 Sacred and Secular Civil Religions

A distinction is often drawn between totalitarian and authoritarian political systems. Linz (1964:293-297) has formulated some of the main characteristics of these type of regimes. The totalitarian political structure involves total domination: it is anti-pluralistic, it tends to be highly mobilized and organized around one single leader and one political party. It includes an official ideology, often extremely nationalistic, with sacred "chiliastic elements." It also includes brutal and complete political repression and control of the mass media, armed forces, and police. The goal is "systematic neutralization of the opposition," that is, of *anti-social* elements and *enemies* of the nation. Nazi Germany would a prime modern example of a totalitarian regime.

The main characteristics of authoritarian regimes, on the other hand, are "limited" political pluralism, lack of an elaborated and well-articulated ideology, the presence of a typical "authoritarian mentality" (ways of thinking that are more emotional and less codified than ideologies), and low political mobilization (Linz, 1964:297). According to Linz, authoritarian regimes are "imperfect forms of either totalitarian or democratic polities tending in one or the other direction" (Linz,

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[80] Israel's civil religion would also fall under the category of state-directed civil religions. See Liebman and Don-Yehiha (1983). The authors argue that subsequent to the establishment of the State of Israel, after Zionist-socialism was displaced, a "civil religion of statism" developed whose goal was the support of the particular needs of state and national institutions. The authors skillfully trace the roots and evolution of three different kinds of civil religion in Israel and argue that all three consciously adopted and adapted traditional symbols of religious Judaism to suit or enhance particular politico-ideological goals. For some interesting material and ideas regarding Israel, see Zeruvabel (1985). For an analysis of political religions in "new nations" see Apter (1963).

1964:293).[81] Mussolini, for example, never gained the kind of total control over Italian society that Hitler did over Germany, so Italian Fascism has been described as a "failed totalitarian experiment" (Pasquino, 1986:46).[82]

Although Linz and others see the lack of an articulated ideology as a characteristic of authoritarian regimes, Evelyn Stevens (1975) argues that claims to legitimacy in authoritarian political systems often rest on a set of beliefs that are ideologically and rhetorically used as an explanation and justification of government's actions. Stevens suggests a taxonomy of authoritarian regimes in terms of "secular" and "sacred" variants of authoritarianism. The "taxonomic principle" involves "the processes by which the exercise of power and decision-making procedures are justified" (Coleman and Davis, 1978:56). An authoritarian regime can be either sacred or secular depending on whether legitimating claims are based on religious or non-religious beliefs and values. Thus, contrary to Linz' claim, Stevens suggests that there is a religiously-based ideology sustaining sacred authoritarianism.

What Stevens calls sacred authoritarianism, others have termed "political messianism" (Moltmann, 1986:55; Apter, 1963:63). Here 'political solutions' tend to take the form of theocracies, and policy makers try to demonstrate that their actions and policies are in harmony with religious principles approved by the Church (Coleman and Davis 1978:56). This type of regime postulates a "pre-ordained" and "harmonious" scheme of things and recognizes "only one plane of

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[81] For an excellent discussion of authoritarianism, in which Spain is the paradigmatic example, see Linz (1964). Also, O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (1986).

[82] The dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet in Chile is an example of authoritarian rule. It represents a case of an "imperfect" totalitarian regime.

existence--the political" (Apter, 1963:63).[83] Its political structure is based on a "mystique" involving some higher principle or "force above" man that conceives the state as an instrument through which it may work out its 'ultimate' ends and moral imperatives. This mystique may be as varied as "the dialectical laws of history and social development for the Marxists, the destiny of the nation and race for the Hitlerians, or the ideal of the true Christian society for Franco" (Linz, 1964:303).

The French Revolution, for example, sought to establish not only a secular but a completely anti-Christian civil religion (Bellah, 1967:13). To institutionalize the worship of the goddess of reason, Christian churches were transformed into Temples of Reason, and those churches that did not, or could not, become centers for the new cult were ransacked, shut down or used by revolutionaries and government officials as centers of political activity (Demerath and Williams, 1985:155; Markoff and Regan, 1982:333; De Azevedo, 1979:12; Willaime, 1993:573). The calendar was also rearranged--the birth of Christ was replaced by the birth of the Republic, Sunday was abolished, and priests were urged to abdicate. In short, the whole nation was forced to secularize. "Robespierre sought to replace Christianity with the Cult of the Supreme Being" (Markoff and Regan, 1982:333). The glorification of the nation-state, patriotism, and civic virtue were imposed and maintained through a civil religion and a series of rituals and ceremonies specially devoted to encourage worship of France and the goddess Reason (Giner, 1993:31). The French state ever since

[83] This contradicts Bellah's and Coleman's "evolutionary" model of civil religion, whereby civil religion in its fully differentiated expression (as a totally independent system of beliefs) would appear only in the "modern" world. It is in the modern world that those extreme cases of sacred authoritarianism are to be found.

has occupied a central role in the definition, production, and self-understanding of the French identity.[84]

In a similar vein, the Soviet Union made of Marxism a civil religion where tenets of faith of historic materialism were not only taught but became compulsory (Zeldin, 1969; Luke, 1987; Giner, 1993:36; De Azevedo, 1979:12). Jennifer McDowell's study (1974) of the political rituals and symbolism of power in the Soviet Union is particularly revealing. By analyzing public ceremonies or those celebrating national holidays, McDowell shows how they were intended to strengthen and legitimize Soviet authority. Likewise, Christel Lane has shown, in her interesting study *The Rites of Rulers* (1981), how state-managed rituals and symbols were an important aspects of the general ideology promoting the legitimacy of the Soviet state.[85] Because of the 'religious' nature of Marxism, the former Soviet state has been characterized as "an inverted Roman Catholic theocracy and Russian Marxist communism as [an] inverted Roman Catholicism" (Zeldin, 1969:110).[86] China provides another obvious case where the Marxist ideology, reinterpreted by Mao-Tse-Tung in the *Red Book*, became sacralized and enforced upon Chinese citizens through a series of ritual activities. Mao himself became a theocratic ruler. This was particularly evident during the Cultural Revolution, where political and normative pressures "from the top" forced Chinese citizens to accept a uniformity of values and conformity to the party (Zuo, 1991:107, see

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[84] As Willaime (1993:574) notes, "l'Etat occupe un place centrale en raison de la spécifité française des rapports Etat/société. Contrairement à l'Angleterre où prédomina une vision principalement juridique et instrumentale de l'Etat, contrairement à l'Allemagne où la nation précède l'Etat..."

[85] For more on the legitimation mechanism in the Soviet Union and its connection to the political religion of Marxist-Leninism, see Lane (1979; 1981), and Zeldin (1969) as well.

[86] Zeldin (1969:110) argues that Marxism as a doctrine resembles Catholicism insofar as its principles clearly form a "body of beliefs." As in Catholicism there are "believers," "teachers and prophets," "saints and martyrs" of Marxism. There are sinners to be punished, "heresies" to be eradicated, "doctrines" to be taught, and rituals and ceremonies to be celebrated. There is only "one truth (dialectical materialism)," and only "one Church--the Party."

also De Azevedo, 1979:8; Demerath, 1994-1134-114). Fidel Castro's Cuba may be cited as yet another example. Castro has tended to transform the Cuban political process into a 'religion.' Totalitarian or monopolistic types of civil religion, with strong nationalistic secular ideologies (as in the case of France, Communist Russia, Communist China, Cuba, or Turkey following the Attaturk revolution), have been identified as "secular nationalism" (Coleman, 1969:72; Stevens, 1975). Coleman suggests that secular nationalism is an "alternative" civil religion with a "world-view and symbol system" which either replaces or competes with the traditional religious system of organized churches.

Franco's Spain, on the other hand, is a classic example of "sacred authoritarianism," and so is Shinto Japan.[87] In both cases there is an overt identification of political and religious allegiances. Franco, for example, explicitly assigned a religious role for the state and justified its repressive apparatus by investing it with religious authority (Coleman and Davis, 1978:56-57).[88] At the same time, the Spanish state made "quasi-religious" demands upon its citizens. A "good" Spanish citizen was entrusted with a national, religious, and political mission: to defend Christianity and push the "barbarians" (communists, socialists, and anyone opposing Franco's regime) outside the Spanish gates. Political obedience and allegiance to the state became thus a measure of one's loyalty to the "Spaniards' view of themselves as the civilizers and Christianizers of a barbaric and godless world" (Steven, 1975:362). A political 'calling'(to defend Spain) was equated with a religious 'calling' (to fight atheist Republicans)--anyone not accepting this unity became suspect. State and regime took on sacred characteristics which were employed to provide political legitimacy to the regime.

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[87] Pinochet, in Chile, as discussed in Chapter Five, was heavily influenced by Franco and tried to imitate his style of sacred authoritarianism.

[88] For a comprehensive description of authoritarianism in Spain, see Linz (1964)

Similarly, prior to the Second World War the Japanese government promoted and tried to revive a form of state Shinto which revolved around veneration of the emperor (Takayama, 1988:218).[89] The emperor was assumed to be genealogically linked to the so-called "age of the gods," and the Japanese hierarchical social structure was justified in sacred terms. The emperor was "descended from the sun goddess and [took] his preeminence on earth just as she [took] hers among the gods" (Bellah, 1980d:29). In pre-war Japanese society, "divinity, society and the individual" were fused in one organic whole. Bellah has argued that the type of authoritarianism Japanese society has endured in most of its history is the result of a religious ideology that has systematically justified a hierarchical social order, promoted an "ethic of moral heroism" among the common people, and consciously manipulated the Japanese civil religion and its Shinto mythology (Bellah, 1980d:29-37). In these sacred forms of nationalism, Bellah notes, "fully and whole heartedly carrying out one's part in society and living up to its values means identification with ultimate reality" (Bellah, 1957:186, in Coleman, 1969:70). Japan and the USSR are particularly instructive for they provide sample cases of state-sponsored civil religions, but of a different kind. Whereas the Soviet Union used "political religion" to support the authority of the state, Japan used "religion politically" to achieve the same end (Apter, 1963:61). Japan's type of political solution to the politico-religious problem represents, in Bellah's view, a "theocratic" or "archaic" form of civil religion.

[89] State Shinto has been identified as a civil religion, or as a religion of Japanese nationalism at the time of the Meiji Restoration in 1868 which lasted until 1945 when Japan unconditionally surrendered to the Allied Forces (Takayama, 1988:330, see also Bellah, 1980d:27-39).

IV.3 From "Archaic" to "Modern" Civil Religions

For Bellah, as mentioned elsewhere, the crux of civil religion is the "religio-political" problem. This problem is seen by him in evolutionary terms. Bellah assumes that different types of solution and different types of civil religion parallel different "phases of religious evolution." He does not place the focus of his evolutionary scheme on economics, industrialization or modernization, as others scholars do, but rather locates the increased development of civil religion with the development of religion itself, in a particular society, at a particular time. In other words, civil religion is seen as varying with the stages of religious evolution (1980a, see also Bellah, 1970, especially Chapter Two).

In primitive society there is no differentiation between the religious and political realm, hence there is no need for political solutions--the 'problem' does not really exist. In archaic societies the focus of political attention is the divine king; there is a profound divide between the kingdom of "darkness" and the kingdom of "light." Bellah observes that an "ambiguous line of demarcation" between the religious and the political, or a "low degree of differentiation between divinity, society and the individual," is a typical manifestation of a "full-fledged archaic solution" to the religio-political question. Consequently, it also indicates a "full-fledged archaic civil religion." Theocracy is the result of this type of political arrangement. Bellah acknowledges that theocratic or "archaic tendencies" may also appear in modern society as well, for "vestiges of divine kingship" have the tendency to re-emerge or develop whenever powerful political leaders appear, "as in the cases of Hitler, Stalin, and Mao-Tsetung" (Bellah, 1980a:ix). Under such circumstances, the state, together with its political authorities, becomes sacralized. Sacred leaders become the sole source and sanction of morality, making "a rule of law and not of men virtually impossible" (Apter, 1963:73).

When political authority becomes sacralized, God is customarily placed on the side of those who command power. Consequently, it is not uncommon to find a single leader or a "Military Junta" claiming to have become the depositories of truth and the representatives of God on earth. In such cases, a national state or a particular individual assumes a supra-human dimension and becomes the prophet of civil religion.

Bellah argues that the emergence of historic religions, while "never fully overcoming" archaic or primitive "tendencies" introduces a degree of differentiation between religious and political systems. The relationship between political authority and religious authority becomes, thus, more problematic and more pronounced. In societies with historic religions, whether or not there is a clearly differentiated religious structure, a "sharp tension" usually develops between religious leaders and political authority. The most common solution to this conflict is a "division of labour," whereby religious authorities legitimize the state, asking in return "political recognition" of their own authority, and a dominant place in religious matters. In such cases, "the state expects the church to help maintain social tranquility and the church expects the state to conform to at least minimal ethical norms" (Bellah, 1980a:x).

Following this evolutionary pattern, another possibility arises: a "distinctly modern type" which exhibits a high degree of differentiation between the sacred, the social and the individual realms. Here, political legitimacy and moral concerns are not fused with either church or state but are embodied in an independent set of religious symbols (Bellah, 1980a:xi). In terms of Bellah's scheme of evolution, the "unique" political solution that characterizes the American case, represents the highest stage of religious evolution.

It is interesting to note that although Bellah himself recognizes that the fusion of the political and the religious realms, and the fusion of political and religious power is "a permanent possibility in human history," he has nowhere elaborated in full detail, or explicitly mentioned, that this type of 'full-fledged archaic solution' is, broadly speaking, manifested in authoritarian, totalitarian or despotic regimes. Bellah alludes primarily to the case of Japan as "especially instructive" for it represents a modern society in which a civil religion of the archaic type has survived not "in the recent past [but] to a certain extent even today . . . " (Bellah, 1980d:28). Discussing political authorities that "fall back" on archaic patterns, and claim sacrality or claim that they are "God's agent on earth," Bellah draws examples from the Israelite kings, Chinese emperors, the Shah of Iran or the Ayatollah Khomeini. Only in passing does he mention Hitler, Stalin and Mao Tse-tung, as cases of totalitarian societies where "*elements*"(my emphasis) of divine kinship have emerged (1980a:ix).

Likewise, in his discussion of "political religions" in developing nations, Apter (1963:73) argues that political solutions in the third world often take the form of theocracies. Through the incorporation of theocratic elements, he notes, the "secular is elevated to the level of the sacred." The sacred is employed as a conscious tool for political rule--"to develop a system of political legitimacy" and as an aid in mobilizing the community for political ends (Apter, 1963:77). Apter claims that theocratic political solutions arise in new or underdeveloped nations partly because of their "failure to achieve massive industrialization." This would suggest that theocracies, or theocratic tendencies and praxis, are confined only to new nations in the process of modernization. However, the *tendency* to sacralize the political order and political authority is not only a characteristic of political religions in developing nations, nor is it a political solution of ancient times

or of less developed societies alone. Rather, it is a *defining* feature of political religions wherever they are found. Hence, although Apter's particular concern is Third World countries, much of what he says (although he fails to realize this) is universally applicable.

Indeed, many of the characteristics Apter attributes to "political religions" in the new nations are also found elsewhere in the Western world. He notes that political religions "strengthen" the arm of the state and "weaken the flexibility" of civil society. In order to retain authority, political leaders make use of both force and citizens' indoctrination. The idea is to implant in the citizens "attitudes of respect and devotion to the regime." Apter argues that political authorities are quick to realize that "no ordinary ideology" can overcome the problem of social and political discrepancies. Hence, a "more powerful symbolic force, less rational, although it may include rational ends. seems necessary to them." This "force" is what he calls "political religion" and this political religion, he believes, is found within the limits of 'new' or developing nations alone (Apter, 1963:61).

Zuo (1991) makes a similar distinction between the "political religion" of China and the "civil religion" of modern Western societies. The divide, however, should not be located along the lines of East and West, or new nations and developed ones. Rather, the distinction should be in terms of liberal democracies or totalitarian/authoritarian political systems whenever they appear. For they may emerge (and have appeared) in the highly advanced countries of the Western world. Nazi Germany is a tragic reminder of this. But civil religions *a la Rousseau*, in less extreme forms, may also appear in democratic societies. Consider, for example, the civil religion of South Africa, "which elevated the doctrine of the Dutch Reformed Church into a sacred political virtue" (Apter; 1975:65, see also Moodie, 1975).

This would suggest that there is no necessary linear progression of civil religions. If we take civil religion to be a continuum, ranging from civil religion (its Durkheimian cultural form) to political religion (its Rousseauan ideological form) it becomes easier to argue that civil religions, in its two varieties, are found both in democracies (more likely civil religions) and in totalitarian states (more likely political religions). I use the idea of a continuum because the notion of civil religion has both a cultural and a political dimension. The cultural aspect refers to the world of representations, symbols, and images that emanates from society--that is, its self-conception or its *ethos*. The political dimension of civil religion refers to both the state and the system of mediation between the state and civil society--that is, the political regime. Political religions *a la Rousseau* require a more specific ideological component than civil religions *a la Durkheim*, but it is highly unlikely that civil religion will appear anywhere in 'pure' form. However, we can distinguish between those societies where the intermingling of the sacred and the secular is imposed, where political ends are elevated to sacred ranks, and where political leaders adopt an autocratic type of civil religion, from those adopting a liberal democratic pattern, where allegiance to the tenets of faith is not compulsory, even if, at times, the line of demarcation is somehow blurred in practice. In the former case, values and goals are often laid down by a single political authority and regarded as sacrosanct. In the latter, values are held together by what Apter calls a "framework of law" that is itself highly valued (Apter, 1963:65). Furthermore, civil religion may vary in the degree to which significant groups come to accept the civil religious discourse. So, one should recognize differences in "degrees" of civil religion.

The idea of a continuum will be discussed in greater detail in the conclusion to this thesis. What is important for the moment is to make clear that, contrary to Bellah, Apter, and other scholars,

I reject the evolutionary view which sees civil religion advancing in a straight, irreversible line. While civil religions may have developed from archaic forms (undifferentiated) to modern forms (in my opinion never fully differentiated), civil religion's tendency to irrupt and oscillate either to the side of society (civil) or to the side of the state (political), is dependent on particular historical and political circumstances. The emergence of one or the other type of civil religion depends on the nature of the state and society at a particular time. Democratic societies with well institutionalized civil religions may show "tendencies" toward strong political religions at particular historical junctures. For the tendency to use civil religion as an engine for political rule is found both in democracies and authoritarian regimes. In short, Bellah's model, ranging from archaic and undifferentiated to fully differentiated civil religions, does not really do justice to the complexity of the situation.

This means that political religions (civil religions as Rousseau envisioned them) have not totally disappeared from modern pluralistic societies. They have only adopted new forms and shades (Moltmann, 1986:47). This was the case, for example, during the McCarthy era in the United States, or during the Nixon presidency, when civil religion was used as a state tool--against the so-called 'communist conspiracy' in the former case, and in the defense of the Vietnam War in the latter. As Rouner comments: "naked power-grabbing in the Mexican War and useless slaughter in Vietnam have been justified by appeals to the principles of American civil religion" (1986:237).

Civil religion may be more or less repressive to the extent that it uses religious symbols and values to legitimate or foster any kind of domination, including "economic, political, ecclesial, or other forms . . . " (Lamb, 1986:157). Leo Pfeffer has commented that when civil religion is consciously used to pursue a political purpose, or allows itself to become "the handmaiden" of

national ambitions, programs, and policies, it is far more likely "to be an ignoble than a noble" enterprise (1969:360). It should be noted that Bellah answered Pfeffer's commentary by arguing that the relation between religious commitments and political goals travels in an exact opposite direction: "national purposes are the handmaiden of the fundamental value commitments of the civil religion," not the other way around (Bellah, 1968:390). In any case, when civil religion is deliberately used to achieve political objectives, when there is a "flurry" of conscious manipulation (to use Bellah's words), we are undoubtedly moving in the direction of Rousseau. When this happens, the moral or civic claims of the state leave no room for a spontaneous or free endorsement of the political system. I am not necessarily suggesting that a Rousseauan-type civil religion (state-manipulated or controlled) is always and inevitably "ignoble." While some civil religions may be focused in insuring the survival of the nation, others may be dedicated to the liberty of its citizens, and still others to the suppression of all liberties and rights.

The road from authoritarian rule to democracy does not always follow a straight path, as history so clearly indicates. Even under liberal regimes, ("which have been in the history of the planet few and brief"), some form of "despotism" may only "await" the right opportunity, or the wrong charismatic leader to emerge (Bellah, 1980:19). The question to be asked is, under what conditions might the two forms of civil religion (civil and political) undergo changes in one or the other direction, and what might these changes entail? Or, what role does civil religion play in modern politics either as a political or as a cultural resource? Clearly, its democratic or anti-democratic potential is grounded in political processes and the uses of civil religion by particular groups at particular times. In other words, the benefits and costs of civil religion would seem to depend, crucially, on the style of politics and the type of government under consideration.

The full political implications of the civil religion concept have not been appraised realistically by most scholars. As mentioned elsewhere, one has to leave the sociological field in order to find a serious effort to acknowledge Rousseau's intention. Indeed, American historians and theologians have been more sensitive than American sociologists to the dangerous ramifications of civil religion as understood by Rousseau. For example, Richard John Neuhaus, a theologian, recognizes the grave consequences inherent in civil religion of the Rousseauan variety (which he rightly calls political religion). He unambiguously denounces the totalitarian implications of Rousseau's civil religion. Neuhaus writes: "Rousseau spelled it out in theory and, in our time, we have seen its practice in . . . both Nazism and Marxist-Leninism" (1986:101). Likewise, Jurgen Moltmann (1986:42), a Professor of Theology, has also shown the dangers of "political religions" or the application of religious ideas and values to political life. In "World War I," he writes,

> in the name of the political religion of the German nation 'for God, King, and Fatherland,' our fathers were driven to their deaths in Langemark and Verdun. In the Second World War, in the name of the political misoneism of the Third Reich, 'for Fuhrer, People and Fatherland,' my generation was marked by the crimes of the concentration camps and hounded into the mass graves of Stalingrad" (Moltmann, 1986:42).

Germany's self-conception and destiny, embodied in the civil religion of the Nazis, "inspired the followers of Hitler to promote genocide and global warfare" (Bennett, 1979:123). The ability to organize "massive public rituals," Wuthnow reminds us, is a compelling way used by modern governments (democratic and totalitarian) to reach out and/or extend their influence into the lives of ordinary citizens--the so-called silent majority. Hitler's genius and talent in this respect is, perhaps, unsurpassed as the Neuremburg rally, in particular, testifies. In fact, the Nazi rallies

orchestrated by the German state at the time, provided "the first evidence of the importance of such rituals" in modern society (1994:148). The Nazi state, through public rituals and political propaganda, sought to make civil religion an instrument of its political agenda. German civil religion, in short, "celebrated Nazism with a corrupt Christianity" (Moltman, 1980:1).

The "perversion" of civil religion leads consistently to political actions that confuse the "sacred investiture of institutions with the notion that institutions (and their official representatives) are the sources of the divine order of politics" (Bennett, 1979:129). The tendency in such cases is to transform the political process into a religious phenomenon, so that political leaders, actions and programs acquire a sacred character.[90] As a result, any political objective is invested with sacred characteristics, and ultimacy is conferred on all political and social programs. The dual process of politicizing and religionizing all aspects of life, however, often leads to the disappearance of politics as such. Once the political process is imbued with a compulsory and sacred "mystique," political power holders seem to find it easier to legitimize their 'mission' and justify all kind of ruthless and violent acts "against the enemies of the 'cause'"(Apter, 1963:63, 78). Not surprisingly, these types of regimes are of necessity based on fear and hatred of both internal and external enemies (Moltmann, 1986:55). Political enemies, seen anywhere and everyday, are dangerous for they are "cut off," so to speak, from the "divine" political order (Bellah, 1980a:ix).

But the political tendency to divide the world into friends and foes is apparently a universal phenomenon. The world, in fact, seems to be "divided into a Manichean dualism of good and evil . . . " (Rouner, 1986:5). The not so distant American obsession to divide the globe between "the free world and the Communists, and the Communist tendency to reverse the picture," or the Muslim

[90] In Chapter Five we will see that Pinochet, in Chile, endowed his mission of "reconstrucción nacional" with divine characteristics. One author, in fact, has referred to the Chilean coup d'etat as "Le Coup Divin" (Bastien, 1974).

division into "the house of Islam" and "the house of war" are recent versions of this phenomenon (Bellah, 1980a:ix). That this tendency is clearly more marked in authoritarian and despotic societies, almost everyone would agree. To be sure, in political religions this enmity is magnified "into an apocalyptic drama" (Moltmann, 1986:55).

To sum up, political religions in authoritarian regimes represent particular and extreme cases of civil religion *a la Rousseau*. They function essentially at the state level, and are designed and manipulated by the political elite. Elements of 'divine kingship' appear highly marked--political leaders and their programs acquire truly 'divine' characteristics. Ideological dominance is achieved by the capacity to impose a program of action and make it viable. This is usually attained by controlling and manipulating communications media and mechanisms of repression. The political order, characterized by its authoritarian and exclusionary pattern, requires the use of repressive force to control the political process and to enforce the tenets of faith. The unfettered power of the state fills the role of the god that rules over a particular nation. So, the viability of this type of civil religion depends on the capacity of the dominant political bloc to sustain its power.

IV.4 Religion as a Society-Oriented Institution

Several scholars, following the Durkheimian tradition, have argued that every society in order to survive "needs" a religion. Casanova, however, in his book *Public Religions in the Modern World*, contends that as long as civil religion is conceptualized "politically" (at the state level) or "sociologically" (at the societal level) as a normative force integrating the political or the social community, "such a civil religion is unlikely to reappear in modern societies." He further argues that it is "theoretically untenable and normatively undesirable" to insist on the "functionalist" existence

of civil religion, in the sense that the modern social order "needs" such religion, for the modern nation-state does not need any longer a religiously-based legitimation (Casanova, 1994:61-62).

Casanova distinguishes three main realms of the modern polity: the state, political society and civil society, and locates the role of religion in all three areas. He claims that the "church" is the most pristine example of a "public religion" at the state level (1994:61). He uses the notion of "the church" in the Weberian sense of being an "obligatory monopolistic community of faith," having "universalist salvation claims." This entails an established church having a "territorially organized compulsory religious community coextensive with the political community or state" (Casanova, 1994:62). When religion becomes "disestablished" and loses its compulsory institutional character, it can no longer be considered a "church." Rather, it becomes a "voluntary organization, a sect, or a 'free church'" (Casanova, 1994:213). Casanova argues that the Catholic church ceased being a "church" in the sociological sense of the term after Vatican II, when it accepted the right of "religious freedom."

Public religions at the political level refer to religions that become either "politically mobilized" or "institutionalized as a political party." Casanova mentions, as examples of public religions at the political level, the political mobilization of the Catholic laity and religious groups, such as the Catholic counter-revolutionary movements in France or in Spain, the formation of lay organizations such as "Catholic Action," and even the development of Christian Democratic parties or the electoral mobilization of the New Christian Right in the United States (Casanova, 1994:61). These movements represent "defensive reactions" of the church to a secularized and hostile modern environment. For example, Casanova notes that to oppose the anti-clerical fury that swept Europe after the French Revolution, or to protect itself from the nineteenth-century European liberal

revolutions, or from the rise of socialist mass parties of the turn of the century, the Catholic church swiftly politicized and mobilized the Catholic laity. This represents, in his view, a clear example of the church becoming actively involved at the political level of society.

Finally, at the civil society level he places "hegemonic civil religions," such as Evangelical Protestantism in nineteenth-century America or the public intervention of religious groups on ethical issues such as abortion or homosexuality.

Casanova believes that only public religions whose center of operation is "civil society" are "consistent" with modern differentiated societies where universalistic principles prevail. He believes that "public religions," active at the political level of society, are only "transitional types." If they have not yet disappeared, he argues, they are bound to do so. The reason is simple: by "voluntarily" accepting "disestablishment" and religious freedom as a universal right, the church has been forced, so to speak, to switch direction and "transfer the defense of ecclesiastical privileges to the human person." As a result, the *raison d'etre* of political mobilization has tended to disappear. This has allowed the church to burst into the "public sphere anew" to defend universal rights or the democratization of political regimes. Casanova concludes that the church, no longer "threatened" either by a hostile state or by hostile social movements, has shifted "from a state-oriented to a society-oriented institution." That is, it has moved its locus of activity from the state to civil society (Casanova, 1994:219-220).

Casanova assumes that once the church becomes society-oriented, it neither needs nor seeks to "reenter" the state or to mobilize the laity in order to regain control over society. The church becomes both "disestablished" from the state and "disengaged" from political society proper. He is thus able to claim the Catholic church by becoming disestablished and disengaged no longer needs

to "establish or sponsor official Catholic parties," or politically fight for its privileges and interests. This change in "location and orientation" has permitted the Catholic church a greater involvement and role in a variety of processes of democratization around the world, as the cases of Nicaragua, Brazil, or Poland attest (Casanova, 1964:61-63). Casanova comes to the conclusion that the "'age' of reactive organicism, of secular-religious and clerical-anticlerical, cultural and political warfare, of religious pilarization, and of Christian Democracy has come to an end." Consequently, he proposes that the notion of *public religion* "ought to be reformulated from the state or societal community level to the level of civil society" (Casanova, 1994:61).

What I find problematic and even contradictory in Casanova's argument are the claims that secular-religious warfare is over, that the state "no longer needs" religious legitimation, and that the church "no longer seeks to reenter the state." His assumption that secular-religious warfare is over leads him to conclude that religion at the state level is also dead. Granted, there is some truth in his claim that there has been a reorientation of the church from an institution firmly anchored in the state to one more diffusely centered in civil society (Casanova, 1994:62). But whether the church in the western world has ceased its attempts to penetrate the state is a highly debatable issue.

In fact, the mobilization of religious groups, or of interest groups with religious concern, has increased dramatically in the last few decades in different parts of the world, a fact that Casanova does not deny. On the contrary, he acknowledges that the "deprivatization" of religion in the modern world seems to be a global phenomenon. Religion, as he writes, has gone "public" in a dual sense: it has become active in the "public sphere" and has gained "publicity" (Casanova, 1994:3). It seems to me that when religion poses a challenge to an authoritarian regime and helps facilitate the transition to democracy, as Casanova claims it does, such religion is involved in the political process

of a particular nation. Therefore, it is difficult to agree with Casanova's claim that the church has "abandoned its traditional attempts to enter political society." Catholic resistance in Poland, as he himself recognizes, implies a "struggle first for human and national rights and then . . . for the rights of civil society to autonomy and self-determination" (Casanova, 1994:227). The right of individuals to autonomy and self-determination is a political right. In the case of Poland, it required political mobilization and also the mobilization of religion at the political level to achieve this end. Even if the church did not organize under the banner of one political party or religious organization, it was politically involved (at the level of civil society as Casanova would argue), to achieve political aims.

American religious activism, on the other hand, while it may seem to indicate a "decline of denominalization," also implies a rise of "special purpose groups" (Billings and Scott, 1994:179). Some authors have noted the tendency of some religious groups to act together in coalitions concerning particular issues, while, at the same time, they may disagree on others. For example, an "Evangelical-Jewish coalition might form around support for Israel, but . . . might be divided over the issue of school prayer." Or, a Catholic-Protestant coalition may be "pro-life" on the abortion issue, but have opposing views concerning "scientific creationism" (Jelen, 1995:279). Religious groups may have a variety of different interests and priorities, but the fact remains that they are often behind the ongoing struggle on the issues of homosexuality, pornography, abortion, reproductive technology, sex-roles, and so on. As some observers have noted, the "religious tinge" of these moral crusades is quite obvious and "unmistakable" (Anthony and Robbins, 1982:219).

Moreover, as Berger (1967) reminds us, denominations in the United States function in highly competitive 'religious markets.' As with any other competitive market, religious denominations must gain 'buyers' (adherents) and beat the religious competition if they want their

voices to be heard. This requires active involvement in the public arena. In order to attain goals through the political system, religious groups need the help and cooperation of potential allies. Lobbying, thus, becomes a very important way to "gain a place at the table" of public debate. They may also engage in "civil disobedience or violence." Regardless of the strategy being used, their final aim is to influence public policy. In other words, coalitions of religiously-based activists often use "religio-moral arguments" to legitimize their demands for political action (Jelen, 1995:279-280; Williams, 1996:376).

Journalistic and academic commentaries give the religious right in the U.S., if not an important role, at least a role, in the election of members of the American Congress. Far-right agendas, as some scholars have noted, explicitly seek to "delegitimate democracy," preach a return to theocratic rule and biblical law, and seek to restore religious values into public life. This would suggest that religious activism on the far right has a specific political agenda--to change and challenge "the rules of the game in American politics" (Billings and Scott, 1994:179; Jelen, 1995:275).[91] Contrary to Casanova's argument, this would also suggest that some religious groups are organized and mobilized at the political level of society.

American religious activism, and the already mentioned "culture war" over moral issues, has been the topic of many publications (Evans, 1996; Bennet, 1992; Hunter 1991). Even "the media has picked up the 'culture war' metaphor" (Evans, 1996:17). As discussed in Chapter Three, culture war theorists explain politico-religious antagonisms in terms of different taken-for-granted ways of apprehending reality which determine moral values and attitudes. It is in this sense, they argue, that people or groups come to have different "cultures" (i.e., different notions of reality). Different

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[91] Some scholars have challenged conclusions about how far-reaching and effective religious groups have been. See Jelen (1987, 1993) and Billings and Scott (1994:179-182).

world views represent different ethical 'truths' which are "non-negotiable." This means that divisions over moral issues can be solved only "through power politics and perhaps actual shooting wars" (Evans, 1996:17-23). In other words, debates in U.S. politics over socio-moral issues are being fought within a politico-religious framework. In fact some religious groups, such as the Unification Church of Reverend Sun Myung Moon, make no distinction between their political and theological messages, so that political struggles and religious struggles become truly inseparable. This would imply that the religious-secular warfare is still not over.

Casanova's distinction between "political society" and "civil society" seems to obscure the issue rather than illuminate it. When religious groups are actively involved at the level of civil society (regardless of whether or not they belong to any organized political party), and when their goal is to change public policies or even the law, the boundary between civil society and political society becomes very blurred indeed. Under such circumstances, religious groups are actively involved in political struggles, not civil ones.

Leaving the United States and looking elsewhere in the world, we find some quite distinct, yet related phenomena. In Latin America, for example, as Casanova also points out, liberation theology has provided leadership, ideology, and resistance to all kinds of authoritarian regimes. High-level Catholic officials have played an important role as "mediators" and "reconcilers" of contending political groups (Billings and Scott, 1994:). Catholic-based opposition to authoritarian regimes in Latin America (Smith, 1982) or Poland (Weigel, 1992), tends to confirm the close interconnection of religion and politics, and the continued presence of religious warfare. It may be argued that the church in such cases is not struggling to defend particular religious values, ideas or practices. Rather, the church would only be lending its institutional support to a struggle that is

essentially secular (e.g., the fight for democracy). Those who opt to think this way, and Casanova does, may be right. But regardless of whether the church is lending its institutional support to achieve secular ends, or whether it is directly involved in order to achieve ecclesiastical privileges (as in former times), the political or secular struggle in which it is embroiled, would still be an indication of politico-religious warfare (religion versus the state, or religious authority versus political authority).

Billings and Scott note that "more recent and fluid" understandings of the politico-religious problem seem to be replacing conventional paradigms regarding church-state relations. This relation is being "rethought from a standpoint that focuses attention on the activity of groups rather than systems" (Billings and Scott, 1994:188). Religion as an institution may have little or no direct political influence, but members of a particular religion may play an active role in salient moral issues, such as death penalty or gay rights (Williams, 1996:375).

Casanova may be right in arguing that the existence of civil religion on "functionalist grounds," in the sense that the state "needs" a civil religion, is now not only "untenable," but also "undesirable" (Casanova, 1994:61). But while the modern state may not "need" a civil religion, there seems to be ample evidence (and agreement) that most organized societies will likely develop one. Of course, how it will be expressed (i.e., the world of representations and myths peculiar to a society) may vary from one society to another, and from one era to another within the same society. Moreover, Casanova seems to ignore the fact that the idea of the political utility of religion (as Machiavelli and other social thinkers have so clearly articulated), has not dwindled away. This means that despite Casanova's contention that the modern state may no longer *need* religious

legitimation, there is ample evidence that modern states continue to *seek* it--evidence which applies both to authoritarian and democratic regimes.

Casanova fails to consider state-directed or state-imposed civil religions which may appear in the modern world. He has not considered, perhaps, how frail are the pillars of civility that prevent any society from a total breakdown. No modern nation, however, is immune from political crises which may produce overnight the collapse of its democratic edifice, and the building of a totalitarian political religion. As De Azevedo (1979:9) reminds us, state-imposed civil religion (in its most extreme form) is always ready to make its appearance, particularly in times of profound political crisis. As he rightly notes, in this category "*on trouve surtout les révolutions politiques et sociales et les coups d'État authoritaires, qui transforment leurs doctrines en dogmes obligatoires pour les citoyens.*" This chapter has provided some sample cases of states attempting to manipulate or create civil religions to serve their own ends. The following chapter presents a more concrete case in greater detail.

Chapter V

Chile, 1973-1980: A Case Study

Starting with Bellah's notion that elements of civil religion are moulded especially in times of national crises, this chapter examines the status of civil religion in Chile during the period of the military regime that violently seized power in September 1973 and was swept from power by a national referendum in October 1989.[92] Some of the major developments and disputes surveyed in previous chapters are applied to the Pinochet regime, to indicate how these theoretical disputes are pertinent to an understanding of the Chilean case, and how, in turn, the Chilean case can help to clarify our understanding of civil religion.

Following Bellah, and the discussion of previous chapters, civil religion is envisioned as a quasi-religious dimension through which societies interpret their historical experiences for broadly political purposes. Recalling Rousseau, however, it is proposed that the Chilean state, under the military dictatorship, tried to impose its own interpretation of Chilean historical experience in terms of a civil religious discourse. In the first place, it is argued, the Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean Armed Forces, General Augusto Pinochet, cast himself in a "priestly" role with regard to the creation and indoctrination of a militaristic ethic of war and patriotic sacrifice. Second, the ideological

[92] This chapter, with minor modifications, is part of a larger article, co-authored with Dr. Lorne Dawson, which originally appeared under the title "Civil Religion in Comparative Perspective: Chile under Pinochet (1973-1989)," in *Social Compass*, 43, 3 (September 1996). Reprinted here by permission of SAGE Publications.

"dogma" of Pinochet's political creed drew on well established religious symbols. However, the "true believers" of Pinochet's civil religion were not the Chilean people (i.e., the nation as a whole), but a select faction of "patriotic," anti-Marxist citizens cast as defenders of the faith. Third, during the first stage of the Pinochet regime the existing institutionalized religious order, namely the Catholic church, offered legitimation to the military authority and provided a resource for the political manipulation of sacred symbols. In Chile, however, it is incorrect to suggest that an undifferentiated, church-sponsored civil religion (of the type described by Coleman, 1970: 69-70 or Gehrig, 1981: 60) ever existed, before or during the Pinochet regime. Despite the relative lack of religious pluralism in Chile, the Catholic Church has in no sense monopolized or directed a civil religion. The church did legitimize the military intervention which overthrew the democratic order, but civil religion emerged episodically in Chile, with state sponsorship, to support and legitimate a pattern of political activity at variance with the dominant tradition of democracy in Chile. Chilean civil religion was an episodic politico-religious discourse fashioned by one "civic group" over and against another. Finally, it is argued that the Durkheimian approach to civil religion remains instructive, for the eventual demise of Pinochet's civil religious discourse is rooted, in part, in its failure to maintain a sufficient sense of moral community. The regime's failure to mobilize Chileans, in a structural and ideological sense, undermined its social plausibility. The delineation of these differences is important, for the ambiguities of Chilean civil religion reflect the diverse and complex ways in which civil religion may be comparatively manifested across history and cultures. It is also important to better understand the theoretical deficiency (one-sidedness) of the civil religion thesis as interpreted by American sociologists. Finally, it is important, once again, to better understand how the concepts of civil and political religion, although related in reality, are analytically

distinguishable. What follows is a specific illustration of civil religion in its Rousseauan (politico-ideological) form.

V.1 Pinochet's Civil Religious Discourse

On September 11th, 1973, a violent coup d'etat produced a political earthquake that shook the very foundations of Chilean society.[93] The military officers who took power claimed to be acting to restore "freedom" and "moral order" to Chile. Legitimizing the coup d'etat, however, posed special difficulties in one of Latin America's oldest and most stable democracies. The breakdown of Chile's longstanding democracy "was especially surprising because it occurred in one of the most highly educated and politically sophisticated countries in Latin America" (Puryear, 1994:10). Chile had been committed to a democratic order, with only two small interruptions, for nearly 140 years. Like military governments anywhere, as Sanders notes (1981:287), the new regime immediately faced a number of common problems: it had "to reorganize the political structure to provide for military control, develop an ideology to guide policy, and cultivate the support of various civilian and religious groups." A civil religious discourse was invoked to help achieve these ends. This chapter offers an analysis of this discourse to better understand this turbulent period in the history of Chile and the comparative use of civil religion as a theoretical construct of the sociology of religion.

In Durkheimian form, the civil religion envisioned for America by Bellah is a common civic faith born, in large measure, of the need to sustain a pluralistic culture by transcending its divergent

[93] For information on the social, political and economic conditions which lead to the coup d'etat see Nunn (1976); O'Brien (1976); Valenzuela (1978); and Sigmund (1977).

and particularistic religious perspectives. In Rousseauan form, the civic creed envisioned by the military leaders of Chile arose in response to a religiously non-pluralistic society, polarized by political dissension. Simple positive dogmas ('without explanation or comments, as Rousseau advocated) and intolerance were the order of the day for this mode of civil religion.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the symbols of American civil religion and their institutionalization have been delineated largely through the content analysis of national documents and public ceremonies (e.g., Bellah, 1967, 1974, 1980; Cherry, 1969; Donahue, 1975; Toolin, 1983; Pierard and Linder, 1988). By scrutinizing what statesmen, politicians and religious leaders say on solemn occasions, Bellah and others have pieced together the elements of the civil religious agenda in the United States. Bellah suggests (1980:203) that such public documents provide "windows to a sacred code." By analyzing some similar documents and speeches, we attempt to open a window on the sacred code of those who set the agenda during this painful winter of Chilean discontent.

The first declarations of the military junta repeatedly carried the message of a "democratic restoration." The "predominant ideological elements of this stage derived from the Chilean democratic tradition, respect for institutionality, and the rule of law" (Arriagada, 1988: 4). In short, the junta called upon what has been identified as a key element of American civil religion: "democratic faith."

The ideological rhetoric of the new government was expressed through the enactment and publication of edicts, laws, decrees, etc. As Arriagada notes, these documents provided the "rationale" used by the Armed Forces to assume "the moral duty imposed by the Nation to oust a government that, although initially legitimate, fell into flagrant illegitimacy." The socialist government of Salvador Allende, it was claimed, had "destroyed national unity," endangered "all

the rights and liberties of the inhabitants of the country," and the right to a dignified and safe existence (Bando No.5 de la Junta de Gobierno, Septiembre 11, 1973; in Arriagada, 1988: 4-5). Consequently, it was declared that Chile "is not neutral toward Marxism, and the present government does not fear or hesitate to declare itself anti-Marxist" (*Declaración de Principios*, March 1974; in Sanders, 1981:291-292). These documents also specified that the armed forces and the national police would hold power "only as long as circumstances so require," based on a "patriotic commitment to restore justice, institutionality, and Chilean identity" (*Decreto Ley* No.1, 11 September, 1973, *Diario Official* 18 September, 1973; in Arriagada, 1988: 5).

To mitigate the incongruity between a repressive regime and deeply-ingrained Chilean traditions, an alliance between civil religion and unrestricted power was established. A new sacred canopy was crafted. The fight against Marxism was presented as a holy war; any opposition to the military junta and its policies was a sign of heresy requiring swift and severe punishment. That is, the "*war*" was symbolically equated with a transcendental view of the destiny of Chilean people, so that it came to be regarded and legitimized as a sacred enterprise. The military junta appropriated for themselves the messianic mission of making Chile "safe" for "democracy." Accordingly, the government's relatively moderate rhetorical style soon gave way to more radical proposals to establish a new social, political, economic, and even moral order (Arriagada, 1988: 12, 22). The armed forces would remain in power for an "indefinite" period to effect the "profound and prolonged action [required] to change the mentality of Chileans" (*Declaración de Principios*, in Sanders, 1981:292).

Pinochet was presented, and presented himself, as the divinely appointed leader who was to lead his people out of chaos, tyranny and disorder. The "hand of God is here to save us," Pinochet

declared on October 13, 1973, only a month after the military intervention. A year after the coup he reiterated this theme by declaring, "you know well enough that people prayed for their salvation and that today they feel free and far from evil.... Faith and hope are the best roads to get to God, and today Chileans travel these roads with happiness and trust in their destiny" (*Discurso a Lideres Evangélicos en Acto de Apoyo al Gobierno*. Diciembre 13, 1974; in Lagos and Chacón, 1987:15). Four years later he insisted, once more, that "those who analyze the military intervention of 1973....will inevitably come to the conclusion that the hand of God was present then" (*Discurso para la Delegación Visitante de Evangelicos Bautistas*, in Lagos and Chacón, 1987:16). Under God's guidance, the military had taken action "at the last minute," because it embodied "the organization that the State has provided to protect itself and defend its physical and moral integrity and its historic-cultural identity" (*Decreto Ley* No.1, *Diario Official*, Septiembre 18, 1973, in Arriagada, 1988: 5). To avoid the "creation of another Cuba," influenced, if not controlled by, the Soviet Union, the junta dissolved the Congress, outlawed Marxist political organizations, and placed all other parties in recess. It also carried out massive detentions of the leaders of Allende's government, of the working class and the students, and of anyone else suspected of leftist sympathies. Electoral rolls were abolished, trade unions suspended, and the government assumed the authority to expel political dissidents from the country. A state of siege suspended individual liberties (Arriagada, 1988:11; Smith, 1982:288). With the notable exception of the Catholic Church, all major social organizations in the country were dismantled or placed under intense surveillance. The Catholic church became in fact a focal point for the "needs of vast numbers of foreigners and Chileans suffering the brunt of the regime's repression" (Smith, 1982:289). Any political or ideological difference was perceived as an antipatriotic conspiracy and betrayal of both the army and Chile.

"Patriotism," equated with anti-Marxism and support for a free market economy, was the first principle of the project of *reconstrucción-nacional*. It became the central symbolic pillar of the civil religion of the day, and Pinochet used all his might to propagate and enforce it. Citizens were indoctrinated to love Chile (i.e., fear and hate Marxists), and motivated to civic duty (i.e., fight Marxism). In several speeches Pinochet discussed the nature of the new secular creed and the means by which it should be transmitted to future generations. These speeches and the ideological propaganda of this period are filled with religious imagery and language that has a distinctly biblical ring. *La Alborada*, an Army newspaper, for example, published on its front page a photograph of a soldier holding a machine-gun and guided by a bright star. The caption read: "Just like the star that guided the wise men of the East to Bethlehem, today the Chilean soldier looks to the pure sky of his Homeland and listens to the always renewed biblical message -- 'I am the root and the lineage of David, the resplendent star of the morning'" (Lagos and Chacón, 1987: 29).

In addition to the media, Pinochet's regime used the public schools to propagate its creed. A special type of education and cultic celebration of the civil rituals were imposed on the young to socialize them to the official ideology. School children, for example, sang a national anthem before each day with a new verse "thanking the valiant soldier" for the liberation of the nation. Marx was officially exiled from any academic discussions and Pinochet's messianic anti-Marxism was clothed in a religious cloak of progress towards a redeemed society, a new order divinely foreordained for the happiness of all Chileans. Thus began the military re-interpretation of Chilean history.

Pinochet's national calling was associated with a global call to regenerate humankind by extirpating the Marxist cancer. Marxism, he insisted over and over again, is "an intrinsically perverse doctrine, and everything that springs from it, as healthy as it might appear, is consumed by the poison

that corrodes its roots." Its danger is "intrinsic" and "global" and "no dialogue or transaction is compatible with it." In the face of the global threat posed by Soviet imperialism, power must be placed in the hands of the armed forces, for only "they have the organization and the means to confront Marxism transformed into permanent aggression" (*Mensaje Presidencial*, 11 Septiembre 1974; cited, along with other instances, in Arriagada, 1988: 22-23). Admiral Jose Toribio Merino, one of the four military men who composed the Junta, emphatically declared: "Let us put it realistically: the world today has one enemy--communism. A monolithic, impenetrable enemy that has acquired technology as good as that of the democratic system but used exclusively for destruction. And it is attempting to dominate the entire world. So, what system should be chosen to combat this monolithic bandit that does not show its face, whose religion is the lie? Only what I do not doubt that..." "Can there only be military governments," asked the journalist, if the only means to eliminate the enemy is war? His reply was immediate: "What other way is there? Which way? How?" (*Ercilla* 2, 165, Febrero, 1977:20-24).

In a national newspaper in 1977, Pinochet stated that "God" gave him "faith in the destiny of Chile." Communists, he said, are dangerous, they are still working in clandestine ways. "We ought to recognize this. They have a mystique which is given by Satan, but they do have a mystique nonetheless" (*Diario Las Ultimas Noticias*, 22 Agosto 1984, in Lagos and Chacón, 1987:19). But he, as an individual, and Chile, as a nation, had been elected by God to fight and eliminate these Satanic forces. He had been clothed with a special, God-given, faith and counter mystique. Accordingly, any opposition to his policies was perceived as a moral problem, and the torture and repression of amoral, criminal, and practically inhuman Marxists was the price for saving Western

Christian culture and Chilean morality. Pinochet, the saviour, was to be in charge of finding and punishing the infidels.[94]

Illustrating this state of affairs, on the thirteenth anniversary of Pinochet's appointment as Commander in Chief of the Army, General Santiago Sinclair, the President's Chief of Staff, addressed an audience of several thousand soldiers. His speech, as Arriagada notes, took the form of an instruction to the Chilean troops on the idea that military leadership "may never be opposed," for it represented a "noble" and "sublime" task involving the defense of the moral order and of the Homeland. Pinochet, soldier and priest, wise leader and noble statement, was the sacred figure entrusted with this military and moral duty.

> In you, First Soldier of the Republic, we see the wise leader, the Commander who has been able to illuminate the difficult path of these years ... You have had but one ambition: the greatness of Chile; a single motto: "Duty is above question" ... And so my General, we wish to publicly renew our obedience and loyalty to the inspiration of the hierarchical authority of Command and the moral authority that flows from your position as military leader ... Providence ordained that you carry the torch of the pledge that we make to the Fatherland. Thus, our loyalty to you is loyalty to Chile ... Beneath the gaze of the Mother of God....and with the sacred inspiration of God...., the Army of Chile acts with a profound and undeniable sense of justice to demonstrate before the citizenry the recognition and honour owed the first soldier of

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[94] This ideological discourse was accompanied by widespread violation of human rights. In the first month after the coup an estimated 45,000 people were arrested. Thousands of Chileans went into exile; some 50,000 simply left and about 10,000 were authorized to leave the country (Sanders, 1981:301). The Vicariate of Solidarity (*Vicaría de la Solidaridad*), the Catholic Church's organization which monitored human rights violations, recorded over six hundred cases between 1975 and 1976 of persons whose arrests "were reported and verified," and who subsequently "disappeared," and whose bodies were never found (Arriagada, 1988: 25).

the Republic, Captain General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte (*El Mercurio*, August 24, 1986: in Arriagada, 1988: 119).

This view of the Commander in Chief endowed with sacred characteristics was reaffirmed by Sinclair himself 15 days later, when Pinochet escaped an assassination attempt: "...my general, the sacred figure of our Commander in Chief has been the victim of an assassination attempt. The Army repudiates, condemns, and will not forgive this act" (*El Mercurio*, 9 de Septiembre 1986).

The dogma of a sacred war against Communism was a recurring litany throughout the regime. It was mitigated during periods of lessened repression, but was always ready to make an appearance when Pinochet's government felt the need to resort to a harder line (Arriagada, 1988: 25). By early 1984, after a little over ten years of largely unchallenged rule, economic difficulties besieged the regime and Pinochet's opponents began to organize, planning strikes and rallies. Demonstrators went into the streets, banging pots and pans to protest his tyrannic rule. When asked, in a 90-minute interview with *Newsweek*, how he had survived the strife--for many had predicted that he would be "squeezed out"-- Pinochet unflinchingly replied: "As for the secret of my survival, it is not a secret. I am a man fighting for a just cause. The fight between Christianity and spirituality on the one hand, and Marxism and materialism on the other. I get my strength from God....Destiny gave me the job.... I never wanted to be President...." (*Newsweek*, March 19, 1984: 67).

V.2 Pinochet's Civil Religion and the Catholic Church

Despite a public appearance of cordial relations with the Allende government, most church leaders privately believed the military coup was not only inevitable but necessary to prevent civil war. The deep-seated respect for constitutionality traditionally exhibited by the Armed Forces would,

they assumed, make the military take-over relatively peaceful and short-lived (Smith, 1982: 287). Two days after the coup, Cardinal Silva Henríquez referred to the flood of "blood which has reddened our streets..." and asked for "respect" for those "fallen in battle" and, specially, for "him [Salvador Allende] who was until Tuesday, September 11th, the President of the Republic" (Smith, 1982: 288). But a common thread running through early church declarations was the public justification of the coup. "We recognize the service rendered to the country by the Armed Forces in liberating it from a Marxist dictatorship that seemed inevitable and that would have been irreversible...." It is "just to recognize" that the armed forces listened to the voices of the majority on September 11, 1973 and, in so doing, "put aside an immense obstacle for peace. Now we ask them to put aside other obstacles that are encountered in the path of the Fatherland" ("Evangelio y Paz," *Working Document of the Permanent Committee of the Episcopacy*, in Villela, 1979: 266). Less than a month after the coup, Cardinal Silva declared: "The Church has always maintained cordial relations with governments of this country. We desire to be of service. The Church is not called upon to install governments or to take power away from them, nor to give or withhold recognition of government. We accept the governments which the people want and we serve them." He further added that Church and state had a task to accomplish: "the task... of removing the great difficulties in which the country now finds itself" (*Diario La Tercera*, Octubre 10, 1973, in Smith, 1982:290). But it was believed that repression would only be a short-term emergency measure needed to restore social order and economic stability, and accordingly Cardinal Silva Henríquez refrained from public criticism of the regime (Smith, 1982: 291). The church, after all, expected to play a prominent role during the period of "*reconstrucción*."

A number of other prominent church leaders were more direct than the Cardinal in their initial reaction to the regime. On September 11th, the same day of the coup, Bishop Francisco Valdés of Osorno composed a public prayer whereby he thanked God for having liberated the nation from the "worst clutches of lies and evil that have ever plagued poor humanity;" a view echoed by at least six other bishops, one of whom even presented his episcopal ring as a "modest contribution" to the long task of reconstruction. Archbishop Emilio Tagle of Valparaiso, appeared on television to read a statement in which he thanked the military for having saved the homeland from the claws of Marxism. He admitted the loss of "blood" but implied that it was an inevitable price to pay to restore Chile to "its former status of a free and sovereign nation" (Smith, 1982:292). Bishop Augusto Salinas of Linares went so far as to place September 11th "on the same level of importance as national independence from Spain in 1810" (Smith, 1982: 293). This view was reiterated, twelve years later, by Monsenor Jose Joaquín Matte, Bishop "castrense," in a mass celebrating the anniversary of the coup. He declared, "twelve years ago, the rosary began to be prayed without a break, and the Virgin Mary brought about the miracle: it was the second independence of Chile" (in Lagos and Chacón, 1987:24).

In general, during the first months of the regime the pronouncements of the church complemented the new civil religious message of the military regime: mild criticism went hand in hand with moral endorsement of the coup, while the people were exhorted to seek reconciliation and peace. Needless to say, such pronouncements were given extensive coverage in the government-controlled media. In short, an alliance between civil religion (in its Rousseauan meaning) and institutional religion was established early on, although it would soon deteriorate as parts of the church began to protest the actions of the government. Even those who criticized the

government were quick to admit the beneficial effects of the military intervention. As Smith ruefully observes (1982: 293), "some of the same bishops who had condemned [the group called] Christians for Socialism for going against episcopal guidelines regarding clerical involvement in politics and identifying their priestly office with partisan political movements, now were guilty of even worse actions themselves, condoning bloodshed and lies." It is possible, Smith argues, that the promises of the military junta, "to restore order and constitutional rule" reinforced the mistaken expectations of church leaders (Smith, 1982: 290-291). It is more likely, however, that fear of Marxism was more deeply ingrained than fear of fascism.

During the period of consolidation of the junta's power and its methods of repression (1974-1976) this attitude evolved towards a more open, yet still cautious criticism. The international press carried a message abroad presenting the Chilean bishops as forthright opponents of the regime. As an institution, however, there is little doubt that the church in the early months of the coup provided important moral legitimacy to the regime. To be sure, ecclesiastical authorities and prelates were ambivalent and even divided. But contrary to the comments of some analysts (e.g., Alexander, 1978: 367-370), it was only when the repression of the regime "touched the bishops personally and lay elites close to them (after mid-1976) that church leaders unambiguously began to condemn human rights violations, and demand a return to a democratic regime (Smith, 1982: 287).[95]

The church had to redefine its position in Chilean society and it began to play a more central and 'prophetic' role in the civil life of the nation. It started bringing into the open questions of

[95] Catholicism's record in the face of fascist regimes has often been "reactionary." In Italy, Portugal, Spain, Brazil and Argentina, Catholic bishops offered no resistance to the emergence of fascist regimes in the 1920's and 1930's. A similar situation was observed in Germany where only isolated clerics openly opposed Hitler's nazism (Smith, 1982:285). The Chilean Catholic church is in a sense quite unique. After a short and initial period of ambiguity, it became a strong voice (the only voice, in fact) openly condemning human rights violations.

repression, the arbitrary arrest and disappearance of prisoners, and it began providing meals, workshops, and other forms of aid to the "victimized masses" of the economic distress brought on by the regime. The new activism and protection of the church created a socio-political niche of considerable importance within which different sectors of the population found some space for free expression (Villela, 1979: 269-271). In the last analysis, the church, while extremely critical of the regime, never broke with the military junta. Both elected to hold each other at a diplomatic distance, while seeking to avoid any direct confrontations. It is fair to say, therefore, that civil religion during the Pinochet regime was state-sponsored and, for a short while, church supported. Pinochet, however, never quite succeeded in making the church an instrument of his own civil religion. On the contrary, the church came to be perceived as a serious threat to his political agenda. Hence, Coleman's (1969:70-71) either/or distinction (i.e., either state or church-sponsored), is not really applicable to the Chilean case. Neither is Coleman's claim that examples of "the church performing the role of civil religion can be found throughout Latin America...."

V.3 Analysis of Pinochet's Civil Religion

As Pinochet's exploitation of religious symbolism testifies, civil religion "has not always been invoked in favour of worthy causes" (Bellah, 1967: 349). Indeed, both "self-less and oppressive actions can be masked in the cloak of civil religion" (Toolin, 1983:47). As things were, the junta's moral agenda gave Chileans little choice: one could either be with the junta or against it; one could either serve God (Pinochet) or Satan (Marxism); one could chose to belong to the kingdom of 'light' or to the kingdom of 'darkness.' It is not difficult to see both millenarian and messianic elements in this situation: the promise of a "reconstructed" Chile, of a better world to come, and the belief in a

holy mission connecting Chile with a global struggle to defend the universal ideals of "freedom and liberty."

Yet the messianic rhetoric was not reflective of a prophetic civil religious development. Rather, the Chilean case more clearly calls to mind Marty's (1974) notion of the "priestly" mode of civil religion. When the discourse of civil religion shifts from a focus on transcendent deity to the promise of national self-transcendence, "the signal of priestly civil religion is raised" (Marty, 1974: 151). As the Pinochet regime confirms, such a civil religion "will have as its main priest the president, since he alone stands at the head of all the people.... and he has greatest potential for invoking symbols of power" (Marty, 1974: 146). In general, Marty argues (1974:147), modern fascisms combine a cosmic vision with national purposes in ways which almost by definition produce a priestly "this-worldly transcendent civil religion." Hence, while American civil religion has been conceived as an attempt to bring America's own life under a higher ideal and its role is to make "any form of political absolutism illegitimate" (Bellah, 1970: 172), Chilean civil religion under Pinochet sought to make a mode of political absolutism sacred and hence legitimate.

In other words, the general tendency to characterize civil religion as a national, non-sectarian faith loses validity, even more, in the face of dictatorial regimes, as does the portrayal of civil religion as a canopy of common values fostering social integration. In line with Weber, we must remember the dual functions of legitimating ideologies and theodicies. They serve to reconcile subservient groups to their fate. But they also serve to assure ruling groups of the righteousness of their rule and privileges. The latter was probably the primary function of a civil religious discourse in the case of the supporters of Pinochet.

In the end Pinochet's quest to unify and strengthen the nation through a civil religious discourse was not entirely successful. He succeeded in maintaining the rulers united, and in discouraging a "deviant" consensus from emerging among those who opposed the regime. This, however, was accomplished as much by military might as by the influence of a civil religious discourse. No one is, after all, attempting to argue that a civil religion played a prominent role in the coup or its aftermath. More simply, we are drawing attention to a political use of religious ideology that has been neglected, not only in the analysis of the Chilean situation, but in the analysis of American civil religion as well.[96]

In Chile a religious lexicon was systematically used to ensconce Pinochet's personal dream of what Chile should be. Yet, the state-sponsored civil religion led not to cohesion but to social disruption, to a constant state of internal war. It offered only a very fragile integration based primarily on the elimination of all alternative political ideologies from public discourse. In the end, the religious dimension with which military repression was masked proved to be insufficient to silence the misuse and abuse of power.

When large sectors of the population were deprived of freedom and justice it became increasingly difficult to agree with the military's conception of civic duty. The treatment of "non-believers" was too harsh and brutal. As the gap between the political ideals of the anti-communist creed and the political reality widened, Pinochet's civil-religious language became increasingly a rhetoric devoid of content, a macabre ploy. It was also difficult to agree with the military's freedom and justice, when large sectors of the population were deprived of the very

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[96] Some movement in this direction was admittedly made in Chacón, H. Arturo y Lagos, S. Humberto's *Religion y Proyecto Politico Autoritario* (1986) and, Lagos y Chacón's *La Religion en las Fuerzas Armadas y de Orden Chile*, (1987). However, these brief analytic readings do not employ the concept of civil religion and lack a theoretical base.

freedom and justice that was being preached. His trumpet call to patriotic battle was heeded by ever decreasing elements of the population, including the Church and the bourgeoisie. So in the end, the Chilean experiment with a Rousseauan civil religion supports Marty's (1974) and Richardson's (1974) suspicion that civil religion is used to fulfil different purposes at different times. Such being the case, civil religion tends to be "episodic."

Thus, contrary to Bellah's notion, every civil religion is not necessarily a national civil religion. The Chilean *nation*, personified by the military junta, and specifically by Pinochet, appropriated the destiny of Chile as its own, but it never represented the whole nation. The rhetoric of *patriotism* fell into the hands of fascist forces which tried to impose the idea that "loving Chile" and "being patriotic" was synonymous with hating Marxists, leftists, and even moderate democrats who opposed the regime. For several years, the religious-military ideology, combined with total repression, effectively rendered invisible any opposition to the junta. Repression and pious pretense joined hands in Chile, and in the name of non-violence, institutionalized violence ran rampant for 17 years.

V.4 Chilean Civil Religion in Comparative Perspective

Sociologists have made only tentative inroads into the investigation of the factors affecting the relative "success" of civil religions. A survey of the comparative literature leads us to postulate five interrelated factors responsible for the demise or survival of civil religions, factors relevant to the failure of Pinochet's civil religious discourse.

(1) The Pinochet government did not develop sufficient organizational vehicles to carry both the civic and the religious message of his new civil religion. Hammond (1980) has argued, in his

comparative analysis of civil religion in the United States and Mexico, that civil religion never developed in Mexico because there is no set of institutions imbued simultaneously with political and religious significance. Despite the seeming similarity in conditions between the United States and Mexico (e.g., the events of the Mexican revolution and the dominance of religion in the life of the people), historical circumstances made Mexicans much more ambivalent to the introduction of religious themes into their public ceremonies, political speeches, educational system, and judiciary. A much sharper distinction was drawn between the realms of the sacred and the profane. The former was clearly assigned to the church, and the church, which backed the losing side in the revolution, was purposefully excluded from the affairs of the state.[97] Alternatively, in the United States, "the Puritan method of harmonizing politics and religion led to institutional changes, which in turn facilitated development of civil religion" (Hammond, 1980: 79). Churches became voluntary associations, and like other such associations engaged in much political activity. "Persons ... found it easy to be simultaneously 'religious' and 'political.'" As a result, by extension, political, educational, and legal institutions could more readily become imbued with certain general sacred meanings and duties.

Similar patterns of institutionalization of civil religion have been noted in the cases of Iran and Japan (and one can readily speculate about other cases such as Poland, Myanmar, etc.). As Braswell (1979) delineates, in a Rousseauan fashion, the Shah of Iran strove to explicitly create a

[97] I disagree with Hammond's conclusions once more. While it is true that a civil religion of the type one finds in the United States never developed in Mexico, it is not less true that one can infer, from Hammond's own article, that Mexico has the type of civil religion identified by Coleman (1969) as "secular nationalism." The problem is that Hammond's basic approach to Mexico's civil religion has been worked out primarily in relation to the American case. He has taken American civil religion as the paradigmatic model through which he evaluates Mexican civil religion. In so doing, he has drawn the mistaken conclusion that Mexico does not have a civil religion. To be sure, Mexico does not have an 'American' civil religion, in the sense of having institutions imbued simultaneously with political and religious significance.

complete religious organization, loyal to the government and its objectives, which paralleled and was intended to supplant, the traditional Shiite hierarchy of Iran. In the case of Japan, Bellah argues (1980) that the roots of the almost Machiavellian exploitation of the institutions of state Shintoism, during the 1930s and 1940s, run deep into the nation's past, and that the practice remains a live option for the future (see also Takayama, 1988).

In Chile the Pinochet regime was content to anchor its civil religious discourse in a more traditional alliance of government bureaucracy and the army. Attempts to fashion independent religio-political organizations were resisted because of Pinochet's autocratic suspicion of mass political movements, his confidence in the army, and his firm identification with the Catholic Church. In May 1975 the *Movimiento de Unidad Nacional* (MUN) was founded to support and extend the efforts of the regime. Among its leaders was the most influential civilian advisor to the junta, the right-wing, authoritarian, and staunchly Catholic Jaime Guzmán. In principle, however, the movement was established to be independent of the government, and by March of 1977 the youth group of *MUN* actually began to issue public criticisms of the policies of the government, and the movement rapidly disappeared. The proposed *Movimiento Pinochetista* of 1979 never moved ahead for it never received official support. Likewise, the *Movimiento Cívico Militar*, which theoretically was to coordinate political activity at the municipal level, also failed to develop any momentum, and to receive official endorsement . Following announcement of the movement in 1980, less than 700 citizens joined in the entire city of Santiago (Remmer, 1989:140). The failure of the Pinochet government to develop an organized mass base, even at the height of its popularity, provides a clear indication of its fear of independent loci of political power.

(2) In like manner and for similar reasons, the Pinochet regime did not give sufficient attention to the development of relatively independent civil religious symbols and ceremonials. Markoff and Regan (1982) place much emphasis on the empirical manifestations of civil religion, noting the consequent need to mark the differences of "tone" in civil religions. On the one hand, as noted in Chapter Four, revolutionary France presents us with a "dazzling and changing hodgepodge" of civil religious ceremonies and texts. On the other hand, Malaysia presents us with a minimalistic civil religion that is a "model of consistency and coherence" (Markoff and Regan, 1982: 339). Yet in each instance specific events and activities can be pinpointed which reveal the presence and character of the civil religion in question (cf. Liebman and Don-Yehiya's discussion of Israeli civil religion, 1983; or McDowell's, 1974 analysis of Soviet civil ceremonies). Alternatively, the Pinochet regime was content to infuse the existing occasions of state and church activity with elements of a civil religious rhetoric. There were no new equivalents to the Nuremberg rallies, Israeli commemorations of the holocaust or Masada, no new "Fourths of July." Likewise no new symbols were consistently fashioned, like the French tricolour, Nazi Swastika, or the Soviet hammer and sickle. Yet such symbols are required to galvanize independent commitment to the cause and to socialize the population to the values of the regime. Rather, it seems likely that Pinochet's role-model in these matters was Franco in Spain, and not the more revolutionary figures of fascism, like Hitler or Mussolini.[98] His objective was the preservation of tradition in matters symbolic and

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[98] For example, between October 30 and December 11, 1975, when Franco was on his sickbed, the pro-government, weekly magazine *Que Pasa*, published several lengthy articles praising Franco and his leadership qualities for forging a "new Spain: *GREAT AND FREE*, " for building a new Spain on the "solid base of God's Law." During his government "the Spanish soul flourished [and] the road he walked reached clear levels of divine presence." His approaching death, the article says, marks a "disheartening point for Christianity." Christianity is being deprived of hope for he was the "mas excelso paladin" (the most sublime champion) of the Great Crusade of the twentieth century"--the fight against atheist Marxism (October 30, 1975, No.236). Similar praises, filled with grandiose words and biblical imagery appeared in the issues of November, 20, November 27, December 4, and December 11, 1975.

cultural, more than the cultivation of change and new configurations. This factor, combined with the first one, left Chilean civil religion too dependent on its alliance with the church and the Catholic and conservative heritage of the country, and hence too susceptible to deligitimation in the face of the mounting disaffection of the church and the populace.

(3) The civil religion of the Pinochet regime was founded on insufficiently broad core values. The litany of war against communism wore thin with time, while the traditional values of patriotism, religious piety, and the defence of freedom were insufficiently unique to justify the perpetuation of dictatorship. More stable ("successful") civil religions call upon rich heritages of distinct values, like the "promise" of America, the first and greatest modern democracy, or the "salvific suffering" of the Jewish or the Polish people (Morawska, 1987), the glory of Persia or Islam, or the ancient lineage of Buddhist culture (Seneviratne, 1984).

(4) The civil religion of the Pinochet regime was too dependent also on the notion of an external ideological threat to the nation. Such a preoccupation is a prominent feature of many civil religions, for example, Afrikanerdom (Moodie, 1975), Israel (Liebman and Don-Yehiya, 1983), Poland (Morawska, 1987), contemporary Iran and Iraq. Yet such threats change or dissipate, requiring a change in interpretive frameworks. The very success of the severe oppressive measures instituted by the regime soon undermined the credibility of this threat in the eyes of the populace. Moreover, towards the end of Pinochet's rule the "cold war" began to come to an end and the Soviet "evil empire" began to crumble. Hence the negatively framed civil religious discourse of the Chilean junta lost much of its *raison d'être*.

(5) Nevertheless, the Pinochet regime maintained its hold on power for a remarkably long period of time, and the strong impression persists that its eventual deligitimation and defeat in the

referendum of 1988 were primarily the result of its autocratic actions. The continued abuse of civil and human rights, and the repression of political dissent was flagrantly at odds with the civil religious rhetoric of defending "endangered rights and liberties," "restoring justice," and providing all Chileans with a "dignified and secure existence" (i.e., the language of Edict No. 5 and Decree-Law No. 1). It was also at odds with Chile's long tradition of institutional life and rule of law. As Liebmann and Don-Yehiya (1983) argue, it is the ability to perpetuate the sense of moral community that uniquely sustained a civil religious discourse in Israel, as the nation and its civil religion passed through three successive phases of development, precipitated by internal demographic changes and a shifting external political environment. But the Chilean military junta, factional in its support from the beginning, loss the capacity to maintain even the pretence to being founded on a moral community. In line with the Durkheimian approach to civil religion, then, we suggest that the inability to create a sense of *moral community* was instrumental to the demise of Chilean civil religion. Pinochet's endeavour, like many others, may have been Rousseauan in nature, but its failure is, perhaps, best explained with reference to Durkheim.

In general the comparative literature suggests that most civil religions are self-limiting and hence episodic. There are several reasons for this state of affairs. First, when the political agenda is masked by religious symbolism, "the symbols become tarnished and lose their transcendent and unifying potential" (Gehrig, 1981: 57). Second, when those in power approach politics "as if ultimate moral and religious issues are at stake," the political process is bound to be misused or destroyed. For "the more justified [they] feel in pursuing their program with unqualified zeal and the less likely [they] will be to accept criticism or compromise" (Richardson, 1974: 165). Third, as Richard Fenn has argued, civil religion "weakens" and loses power when the state itself deviates from its standards

"while continuing to invoke its symbols" (in Gehrig, 1981: 57). Yet, "the political practitioners of a particular state will no doubt from time to time, if not all the time, violate the canons of their own moral yardsticks," creating the "openings for the deligitimation of regimes, institutions, and policies" (Markoff and Regan, 1982: 350). Fourth, by and large, "civil religion[s] fail to evoke deep and lasting commitments because [their] symbols are too closely associated with values and beliefs: they lack independent validity; they are not perceived to be rooted in the very nature of reality, the way religious symbols are" (Liebman and Don-Yehiya, 1983: 225). Consequently, when the political environments change, or when values do, civil religions are simply rejected.

All civil religions are probably self-limiting in some combination of these ways. Certainly each of these points is pertinent to the assessment of civil religion in Chile. Less pertinent, but worth noting, is Markoff and Regan's contention that "it is the experience of a gap between parochial identities and the claims of the state that generates the felt need for civil religion" (1982: 342). Accordingly, they conclude that "even a civil religion which is implanted successfully contains the seed of its own demise." Why? Because, they suggest, "when citizens embrace it, they come to see a larger, civic meaning in their everyday activities and grant the executors of the state further power to extend their hold over the periphery. The political center's authority is enhanced -- which, in turn, renders the civil religion gratuitous" (1982: 349). Chile poses a counter-instance to this hypothesis because Pinochet's religious ideology was not a response to the problems of pluralism (at least not in any traditional sense). The creation and maintenance of a civil religion clearly depends on a confluence of contingent historical, cultural, and structural conditions. But as the case of Chile reveals, there is a crucial strategic or purposeful component to the development of a civil religion. This component comes to the fore in consideration of both the structural factors affecting the

"success" of civil religions (e.g., the creation of organizational carriers and symbol systems) and the consistency of the words and deeds of the moral entrepreneurs who chose to bring civil religious discourses into play. In Bellah's own words, civil religion, like any other religion may suffer "deformation and demonic distortions" (Bellah, 1967:15, 12). The civil religion Pinochet and its military junta tried to impose in Chile bears witness to such deformation and distortion.

Chapter VI

Civil Religion and the Spirit of Nationalism

I noted in previous chapters that civil religion, at least in America, is assumed to provide justification and sanctification of national life, values, goals, and purposes. Given the fact that the nation is endowed with sacred attributes, it should come as no surprise that the "religious authority" may be used and "marshaled," not only for a great variety of political programs or agendas, but for an "extraordinary range and variety of American nationalisms" (Wilson, 1974:137fn4). It is always dangerous when a nation acts in the name of God, but it is even more dangerous when a particular nationalist agenda is sacralized, and the nation-state is divinized. This chapter considers this "danger."

In order to show why civil religion may be very close to the "spirit" of nationalism, I return, once more, to the classical roots of the concept, including Bellah's ideas. Critics have rightly observed that both Rousseau's and Durkheim's theories provided an intellectual *milieu* favorable to the development of nationalist ideologies. One may say that on the issue of nationalism, Durkheim moves closer in the direction of Rousseau. Having analyzed Rousseau's and Durkheim's views on this subject, I briefly examine the idea of nationalism in America and America's national-self understanding. The chapter ends with a critical discussion of the structural elements of civil religion which are conducive to nationalism, or to a nationalistic mentality.

VI.1 Nationalism as a Civic Duty

Rousseau's writings belong to an age when the modern nation-state and national consciousness were only beginning to emerge.[99] While he is a well-known philosopher of liberal democracy, he is less well identified "as a champion of nationalism." Asked, in 1772, to advise the Poles on constitutional reforms, Rousseau, in line with his idea that the love of the country and the love of its law are inseparable, advised the Poles to deepen their patriotism. MacFarlane has argued that Rousseau made, in fact, the development of patriotic and nationalistic sentiments the centerpiece of his proposals for constitutional reforms in Poland (1970:108). Indeed, Rousseau assigned to national institutions a fundamental role in forming the genius, the character, the tastes, and the customs of a people, needed to inspire the ardent love of a country. So he counseled the Poles that with few legal changes they could establish a government capable of bringing patriotic virtues "to the highest point of intensity." If individuals love their country before anything else, Rousseau claimed, it will be only natural that they will respect and obey the laws, not out of fear, but because the law represent nothing else than the "inward assent of their will" (Macfarlane, 1970:108-109).

Rousseau's brand of nationalism is characteristic of the democratic, humanitarian nationalism of the eighteenth century. Most commentators agree that it is devoid of any narrowness

[99] The idea of nationalism is often linked to the emergence of the modern nation-state and popular sovereignty, but it is the French Revolution that provided its "first great manifestation" (Kohn, 1967:3-4). After 1789, nationalist ideas and ideals spread to Central and Eastern Europe giving birth to different types of nationalism. Liberal versions, where Rousseau's approach fall, pointed to a democratic world order, while others, based upon "irrational and pre-enlightened" concepts, tended towards chauvinism and exclusiveness. This latter type was to supply the ideological milieu for the great ethnic conflicts of the twentieth century (Kohn, 1967:457-458). See also Bendix (1969) and Hayes (1960).

or sense of exclusiveness. His concern is not the pursuit of national superiority or even national distinctiveness often associated with modern nationalism. Rather, his focus is on the common good, and in instilling in people a love of the national community and a deep sense of being a part of it. Nationalism thus understood requires a sense of belonging, a concern for the common good, and a moral bond with the nation. But if individuals are to have a conscious attachment to the community of which they are part, they must be educated to become citizens and patriots. This role he assigns to civil religion and to education. Both are necessary to promote social unity, both are indispensable to engender a sense of "public-spiritedness" (MacFarlane, 1997:109-110). As Sandel has rightly noted, the "republican politics," to which Rousseau's writings certainly belong, was never "neutral towards the values and ends its citizens espoused" (1996:6).

Rousseau's ideas (and modern European thought, in general), crystallized around some basic concepts such as "liberty, humanity, and patriotism."[100] Rousseau was convinced that a truly free state and the welfare of a truly free community depended for its character upon the individuals who composed it. A corrupt people would be unable to establish and maintain a free commonwealth, or protect individual rights. To overcome moral corruption, all members of the community should be taught civic responsibilities and should be encouraged to cooperate (Kohn, 1967:263). Patriotism was to be the "most efficacious" means to develop civic virtues (Rousseau, 1755/1973:130). Only

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[100] Both patriotism and nationalism promised, at first, increased freedom, dignity, and participation of the masses. Patriotism, originally equated with "liberalism," was synonymous with interest in public welfare and enlightened law: "a patriot was the supporter of good government, an altruistic friend of liberty and mankind, fatherland was an ideal rather than a geographic concept, belonged more to the realm of civic morality than to that of national exclusiveness" (Kohn, 1967:456-457). Nationalism meant participation of all in national affairs. It is in this sense that Rousseau encouraged and espoused patriotic sentiments. After the French Revolution, however, the idea of patriotism began to loose its "academic serenity" and humanitarian goals. "Fatherland" no longer meant to "think in common," or to have a community of interests which transcended social and religious divisions. Fatherland came to be understood as a self-centered, narrow, and exclusive community "forming nations more than ever into distinct corporate personalities, not only politically, but down to the very substance of their life..." (Kohn, 1967:573).

then the general will, the will for the common good which resided in each individual, would prevail. Republican virtue, civic duty, good citizenship, and a healthy patriotic spirit came to be considered central elements for the maintenance, preservation, and the good of the society.

Education was to be essential to cultivate the civic virtue and moral excellence of individuals (i.e., the attributes of character necessary to maintain the common good). That is, it should not only provide instruction but form good citizens and "direct their opinions and tastes in such a way that they will be patriotic by inclination, by passion, by necessity" (in MacFarlane, 1970:195). Rousseau insists that it is not enough to tell citizens "*be good;* they must be taught to be so" (1755/1973:130). A good government, Rousseau writes,

> ... attentive and well-intentioned, ceaselessly vigilant to maintain or recall among the people the love of the fatherland . . . prevents from afar evils which sooner or later result from the indifference of the citizens for the fate of the republic . . . Wherever the people love its country, respects the laws, and lives simply, little remains to be done in order to render it happy (Rousseau, 1755/1984:163-164).

To rekindle national patriotism, he also proposes awarding special honors to deserving and exemplary citizens, reawakening national customs, holding national games, producing national plays, and celebrating and commemorating holidays which should "breathe patriotism"(Hayes, 1960:48).[101] Rousseau, in short, is convinced that "a passionate patriotism [is] needed as the expression of a community's self-consciousness" (Sherover, 1984:xxxix). He expresses disdain for

[101] It is interesting to note that what Rousseau proposes at a national (citizenship) level, to rekindle a patriotic spirit, Durkheim proposes at a school (student) level. To train students for collective life and future citizenship, and to evoke in each child a "feeling of continuity" and belonginess into the community, Durkheim proposes to "compil[e] a history to record class achievements, keeping an honour book, and other souvenirs of past generations of students..." By arousing the sense of "class honour" and class responsibility "the teacher could stimulate the spirit of the group" (in Mitchell, 1990:121).

what he calls "futile declaimers," who travel the land trying "to sap the foundations of our faith," by showing contempt for "patriotism and religion." These "false prophets," Rousseau warns, waste their time and talents trying to destroy and defame "all that men hold sacred" (Rousseau, 1750/1973:16). Rousseau has been called the "prophet" of nationalism primarily because his concept of citizenship cannot be divorced from that of patriotism (Sherover, 1984:212).[102]

Let us now turn to Durkheim's sociology, where it is also not difficult to find an explicit philosophy of nationalism. Several critics have emphasized this aspect of his work (Lukes, 1973; Mitchell, 1990; Wallace, 1990, 1973; Giddens, 1986; Bellah 1973). Wallace indicates that Durkheim's nationalism "is more than evident in his writings, in his teaching, and in his own patriotic activities during World War I" (1990:221). Someone has claimed, however, that although scholars have recognized Durkheim's interest in cultivating, encouraging, and preserving French national identity and French national self-consciousness, no scholar has specifically approached his work "from the standpoint of his nationalism" (Mitchell, 1990:113).

Just as Rousseau before him, Durkheim assigns a fundamental role to education in the inculcation of patriotism, which he defines as "the ideas and feelings as a whole which bind the individual to a certain State." A good patriot is a moral citizen. Morals, however, do not exist *a priori* in the consciousness of each individual. Morals are the "product" of society and they have "force" so long as society itself is stable and organized. So, the state cannot simply be "a spectator of social life" (as liberals would have it). The state is "supremely the organ of moral discipline"

[102] Rousseau writes, "it is certain that the greatest wonders of virtue have been produced by love of the fatherland, that sweet and lively sentiment, which joins the force of pride." This "most heroic of all passions...has produced so many immortal actions whose brilliance dazzles our weak eyes, so many great men whose ancient virtues are taken as fables ever since patriotism has become an object of derision." Yet, he warns that the "love of the fatherland, a hundred times more lively and delicious than that of a mistress, can ...be conceived only by experiencing it, but it is easy to notice in all hearts it inflames, in all actions it inspires, this boiling and sublime ardor..." (Rousseau, 1984:155).

(Durkheim, 1986:201-204). As such, the state must "be present in all spheres of social life and make itself felt" (Durkheim, 1950/1986b:194). One field open to its 'moral mission' is education.

The specific agencies of civic education, the public schools, should be in charge of inculcating the habit of attending to public things and of molding the character of its citizens. Conceived as a mini "political society," the school was to be the primary social institution in charge of preparing every new generation for a life of civic responsibility. Its most fundamental goal was to be the formation of patriotic citizens (Mitchell, 1990:121; Wallace, 1973:4). French education, therefore, should be essentially national--the French spirit of nationalism and patriotism should be spread across the land (Durkheim, 1925/1961b:4).

In 1916 Durkheim gave a lecture entitled "The School of the Future," in which he praised the public school system for accomplishing its task. The war had proven Frenchmen to be heroic, courageous, noble and ready to sacrifice their life for the nation. The war had shown the "*moral greatness of France*." But the idea of the greatness of France needed to be implanted in every heart, and fixed in the conscience collective of every French individual, not only in times of crisis, but also in times of peace (Durkheim, 1916/1979:159). To accomplish this task education should be infused with "moral control" and be under the general moral guidance of the state (Durkheim, 1925/1961b:78). Young people should be taught to act morally, that is, to act in the collective interest by doing their duty. "For to be free is not to do what one pleases; it is to be master of oneself, is to know how to act with reason and to do one's duty" (Durkheim, 1922/1956:71). Durkheim saw in "patriotism" the civil religion of modern times (Wallace, 1990:220). Bellah has referred to Durkheim as a "high priest and theologian of the civil religion of the Third Republic" (1973b:x).

I have already noted the fundamental importance Durkheim places on public gatherings for strengthening collective identity. Through collective ceremonies, individuals can overcome the moral isolation that characterizes modernity. In his view, sacred symbols and rituals are as important for modern individuals as they were for Australian aborigines. Durkheim, for example, assigns to the flag a crucial symbolic importance--it is to be the modern symbol or "rallying point for *la patrie*, just as the totem [had been] for the clan" (Mitchell, 1990:120).

Wallace has argued that patriotism is for Durkheim a sort of intermediary association between the nation and the world. As an an ardent patriot Durkheim was convinced that every Frenchman had obligations to France that they did "not have the right to cast off." But he also seemed convinced that "beyond this country, there is another in the process of formation, enveloping our national country; that of Europe, or humanity." For, it is not national but human aims that are "destined to be supreme" (Durkheim, 1950/1986b:202). Durkheim is emphatic about this. It would be "a cause for despair," he writes, "if one were condemned to think of patriotism only in terms of putting France above all" (in Lukes, 1973:546). Durkheim's proposal, Wallace notes, implies that "the nation as intermediate group should integrate its members into the larger society of the universe and that national interests could not be self-serving." In other words, Durkheim sees the need to move beyond narrow nationalism so as to harmonize "national patriotism with world patriotism." Nationalism, in this sense, was meant to be "a stepping-stone to internationalism"(Wallace, 1990:222).

Durkheim was against certain types of nationalism, specifically, that of the German state. German nationalism was, in his view, "immoral" and regressive, a relapse into a sort of "tribal" or "pagan" mentality whereby national interests were placed above and beyond the "realization of

humanity" (Wallace, 1990:222). In such type of nationalism the idea of internationalism had no place. But nationalism *per se* was neither evil nor immoral. There is nothing wrong with having "national pride," Durkheim reflects. In fact, "as long as there are States, so there will be national pride, and nothing can be more warranted. But societies can have their pride, not in being the greatest or the wealthiest, but in being the most just, the best organized and in possessing the best moral constitution" (Durkheim, 1950/1986b:204). Patriotism would prepare the individual to work for the glorification of humanity. If all the nations of the world would develop a sort of international consciousness, international relations would be not only highly effective, but international troubles would tend to disappear (Mitchell, 1990:123).

Durkheim thus envisions a decline of national difference and the eventual formation of a supra-national community.[103] In his course *The Teaching of Morality in the Primary School*, which he taught in Paris, Durkheim argues for the "possibility of a non-exclusive patriotism committed to internationalist ideals . . . " (Lukes, 1973:118). Then again in 1901 in his address *Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism* he insists that national loyalties should be extended and universalized (Lukes, 1973:350). And in his lecture *On Patriotism and Militarism* this idea is repeated once more. "No matter how aware men may be to their native land, they all today are aware that beyond the forces of national life there are others, . . . unrelated to conditions peculiar to any given political group" (Durkheim, 1950/1986b:201). He was hopeful, particularly before the war, that internationalism would eventually emerge, that men would break the chains of "local or ethnic conditions" and rise

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[103] Rousseau also envisioned a world where nationalist principles could be transcended. In *A Discourse on Political Economy* he postulates the existence of a universal general will of all mankind "the great city of the world becomes the body politic, whose general will is always the law of nature, and of which the different States and peoples are individual members" (in MacFarlane, 1970: 109).

"above all that is particular and so approach the universal." Although in later writings Durkheim's optimism seemed to have waned, he never completely abandoned the idea that "it is the tendency of patriotism to become, as it were, a fragment of world patriotism" (Durkheim, 1950/1986:202-204).

In a typical Durkheimian fashion he saw the "religion of humanity" as a powerful integrative force, capable of becoming a universal religion embracing, or even "substituting" for all other religions (Mitchell, 1990:122-123). The "cult of the individual" or the "cult of man" would be capable of achieving world peace and world integration. The creation of this world religion was, in his view, of utmost importance, for sooner than later "members of a single social group will have nothing in common among themselves except their humanity, except the constitutive attributes of the human person *(personne humaine)* in general" (Durkheim, 1898/1973:52). This modern form of individualism, he believed, originated not from egoism but rather from "sympathy for all that is human."

In other words, the ideals of "moral individualism, at their most abstract level, refer not to the citizens of any particular nation, but to mankind in general" (Giddens, 1986:20). A national *conscience collective* would eventually be substituted by a universal or international *conscience collective*. As Giddens notes, from Durkheim's point of view, there was a "basic compatibility in the modern world, between national ideals, patriotism, and the growth of a pan-national community" (Giddens, 1986:29, see also Mitchell, 1990:123). Durkheim, however, never explained how clan religion could become "intertribal" and civil religion "international" (Schofeeleers and Meijers, 1978:48).

Interpretations of Durkheim's work, based on "selective misreading" of his writings, have led to exaggerated charges that he paved the way for fascism or totalitarian nationalism. There seems to be substantial evidence, however, indicating that Durkheim did not espouse a narrow or chauvinistic form of nationalism. Lukes notes that his writings offer "a conclusive refutation" against those who have portrayed him as an anti-liberal "right-wing nationalist, a spiritual ally of Charles Maurras and a forerunner of twentieth-century nationalism, even fascism" (Lukes, 1973:338).

Durkheim's theory is clearly contradictory at this point. Social integration is not so 'spontaneous' after all, nor is it the sense of belonging or the moral bond attaching citizens to the collectivity and the state. Certain sentiments necessary for the social order require reinforcement, not only through rituals, but through education. The idea of a national ('moral') community has to be inculcated, taught, and transmitted from generation to generation. Individuals, in short, are induced to obey (acquire civic responsibilities) by a moral authority exercised by society and the state.

There are obvious similarities here between Rousseau's and Durkheim's ideas. By insisting that the state be highly involved in education, both are paving the way for possible manipulation and control. Moreover, by stressing the sacred character of state and society, their theories may inspire in individuals a fanatical devotion to a particular collectivity and, by the same token, hostility to other collectivities, nations, or states. Needless to say, Durkheim's theory goes much further than Rousseau's in this respect, insofar as he argues that the object of religious concern, the divine, is nothing other than society. The idea of society as 'divine' or 'sacred,' may foster, in turn, a 'need'

for "any society to set itself up as god and to create gods" (Mitchell, 1990:123).[104] To be sure, while Rousseau was explicitly committed to nationalist principles, he did not foresee that his brand of nationalism could (and would) develop into those tyrannous excesses of the twentieth century. Likewise, Durkheim's arguments (although presented in a more universal form) may also give rise, unintentionally but perhaps inevitably, to nationalism and national self-glorification, even if nationalism is not narrowly conceived (Pickering, 1979:122; Schoffeleers, 1978:15). Durkheim's theory of religion and society contains an ambiguity which is conducive to nation worship. This 'problem' is also present in most theories of civil religion. I will return to this issue shortly.

It seems to me that it is not enough to make clear that his real views point to the direction of universalism. It is also not enough to explicitly acknowledge that he condemned every form of narrow nationalism as either "immoral" or as a return to "paganism." What needs to be acknowledged is that Durkheim proposed "a conception of the nation and the state, which came dangerously close to the very thing he condemned" (Schoffeleers, 1978:14). He simultaneously advocates the religion of humanity or "humanity as a god," while at the same time he propounds "the divinity of the nation" or national self-glorification (Mitchell, 1990, 124). Simply put, the idea of the "nation-god" (or the idolizing of the nation) is an obvious conclusion to draw from Durkheim's writings.

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[104] In Durkheim's writings "society" appears to have a great diversity of meanings. Sometimes it refers to specific groups ranging from the family, tribe, city-state, to the nation, or even religious sects or occupational and professional groups or corporations. He uses the terms "'people,' 'nation,' 'state,' *la patrie*, and 'society'" to denote a 'collective being' distinct from and superior to that of its individual members" (Mitchell, 1990:118). Society also constitute a sacred system of meaning, for it is more than just a collection of individuals or groups (Schoffeleers and Meijers, 1978:5). At other times, its connotation is even "darker" and perhaps "more mysterious." It refers to a collection of "ideas, beliefs and sentiments of all sorts which realize themselves through individuals" (in Bellah, 1973b:ix).

In sum, Rousseau, recognizing a socio-political need, *designed* civil religion to encourage patriotism-- a love of the nation and its law. Durkheim, by contrast, *found* patriotism *to be* the civil religion of modern times. But in the final analysis both presented a proposal that required instruction, indoctrination, and a measure of state control to keep the spirit of patriotism alive.

Bellah's work, which, as noted before, is very much in the Durkheimian tradition, manifest the same weakness and tends to produce the same result. Implicit in his notion of civil religion is the same kind of ambiguity and tension found in Durkheim's theory of religion and society--the tension between "particularism and universalism" (Schofeleers and Meijers, 1978:14).[105] Bellah also envisions the emergence of some type of world civil religion. The global community, according to him, needs "a global concord" for its survival--a global order of civility and justice. So Bellah alludes to a "trans-national sovereignty." But this would require the "incorporation of vital international symbolism into our civil religion, or, perhaps . . . it would result in American civil religion becoming simply one part of a new civil religion of the world"(1967:18). He believes that American civil religion with its "tradition of openness, tolerance and ethical commitment might make a contribution to a world civil religion that would transcend and include it" (Bellah, 1974:xiv). Bellah, true to his American heritage, assigns a "noble mission" to American civil religion and a special place in the world order. This universal civil religion would be a "fulfilment," not a "denial" of American civil religion (Bellah, 1967:18). In other words, under Bellah's construct American civil

[105] Wuthnow sees this tension not *within* civil religion but *between* different versions of it. The conservative version of American civil religion, "closely identified with the biblical faith," is explicitly nationalistic, celebrates capitalism and grants America a "special place in the divine order." The liberal version, by contrast, focuses "less on the nation as such, and more on humanity in general." In this latter construct America's mission is not conceived as "divine" and Americans are not seen as "a chosen people." Rather, if America can play a role on a global scale it is because "it has vast resources..., because it has caused many of the problems currently facing the world, and because it is, simply, part of the community of nations..." (Wuthnow, 1988:247-251).

religion also points towards a "global, cultural resource," or towards a "global civil religion" (Wilson, 1979:147,170).

As in Durkheim's case, there is no doubt that Bellah is far from having chauvinistic national aspirations (Schoffeleers and Meijers, 1978:16). But while it is true that he envisions a world civil religion, it is no less true that the American civil religion he describes is highly nationalistic. By explicitly sacralizing the nation (as Durkheim did before him), he can also be interpreted as advocating a nationalist mentality. This is a charge that Bellah has repeatedly denied.

To sum up, neither Bellah nor Durkheim, not even Rousseau, constructed their theories with condemnable intentions. However, the fact that their theories can be interpreted in a nationalist sense, together with the fear that civil religion might inevitably run the risk of becoming self-glorifying nationalism remain both problematic and unanswered (Schofeeleers and Meijers, 1978:49; Wuthnow, 1994:131).

All nationalisms involve a state ideology, or a sacralization, so to speak, of the national culture. Likewise, all civil religions, whether in their Rousseauan, Durkheimian or Bellahian varieties also involve an ideology that sacralizes national life. In this sense, civil religion is no different than nationalisms which always involve a "spirituality and an ideology" (Mead, 1974). The nation, as one of the most "potent repositories of symbols in the modern world," comes to have religious significance and even "replace religious institutions in the minds of the people" (Marty, 1974:140). One hardly needs to be reminded that Hayes (1960) has called nationalism "a religion." It is at this crossroad that civil religion and nationalism seem to meet.[106]

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[106] For more on the religious aspect of nationalism, see also Hudson's *Nationalism and Religion* (1970).

Apter has argued that most nationalisms take a form "not dissimilar to theocracies" (Apter, 1969:89). Both attempt to create a system of "transcendental values," which provides state legitimation and the "moral underpinnings" necessary to political objectives. Apter's description of the instrumental political objective of nationalisms and theocracies, fits very well the role often assigned to civil religion (i.e., to provide legitimacy and common moral values). Like civil religion, nationalism touches issues concerning the sacred quality of national existence and national values. Nationalism, in short, seems to operate in the same way and play the same role as civil religion. It follows that the concept of civil religion raises the "tangential but no less important issue of *nationalism*" (Demerath, 1994:114).

It seems odd to me that if other systems of beliefs and values, such as communism and fascism, have been included in the literature as a category of civil religion, nationalism *per se* has not. For, as already argued, a kinship does exist between civil religion and nationalism.[107] One might say that there are many points at which civil religion and nationalism meet. Perhaps this is the reason why "there are those who despise the notion of a civil religion, out of fear that symbols of transcendence will be perverted to the uses of the state" (Novak, 1992:302).

In dealing with the issue of civil religion or nationalism, we are confronted with a serious dilemma: how to instill in citizens a healthy love of their country or, in Durkheim's term, a "national pride" and avoid the 'dark' side of nationalism and its excesses? History tells us that while the French Revolution may have given birth to the idea of nationalism in its more enlightened form,

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[107] I am referring here to cultural nationalism which I distinguish from political nationalism. The former refers to loyalty or devotion to one's nation and cultural traditions. The latter politicizes the sense of national consciousness. In its political dimension nationalism becomes territorial and exclusionary, and requires active participation of the state. It exalts one nation above all others, and places primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups.

Nazism and fascism have given nationalism a spiteful name by showing its most perverted face. Fascism "pushed nationalism to its very limit, to a totalitarian nationalism, in which humanity and the individual disappear and nothing remains but the nationality, which has become the one and the whole" (Kohn, 1967:20). So, the danger that civil religion might be transformed into a sort of totalitarian nationalism looms large.

For example, on the level of ideological discourse, the civil religion Pinochet tried to impose in Chile was highly nationalistic. "National security," "national unity," and "national power" were justifications often given by Pinochet in support of military action. 'Enemies of the nation' (i.e., dissidents), were seen as compromising the nation's survival. A triple identification of nation, state, and armed forces (or military government) was established--citizens were viewed only as subordinate subjects. Because the 'essence' of the nation and its 'tradition' was said to be in danger, it fell to the armed forces, the depository of that tradition, to restore order, to take into its hands the destiny of the nation, and to reestablish national unity. Structural problems, conflicts amongst groups, interests, and institutions were discredited, denied, or rejected. Conflicts were the work of 'enemies' of the fatherland. Because national security was defined in terms of 'subversion' by internal enemies, conflicts had to be prevented, and enemies punished. The 'war' required that all the resources of the nation be mobilized in order to achieve national objectives--the most important one being the confrontation of Marxism. The 'national project' devised by Pinochet, and made known through various official documents, was a project to which the entire nation ought to be committed. The military regime left no room for dialogue, disagreement, or even compromise. Any conflict over what the Junta considered 'national interests' and 'national aspirations' was considered illegal--it

violated the principle of national 'unity,' and disrupted the project of *reconstrucción nacional* (Garretón, 1989:68-72).

In recent times we have seen nationalistic passions run rampant, with epidemic intensity. As evidenced by the war in the former Yugoslavia, and the emergence of new countries from the former Soviet Union, nationalism can be a fierce and destructive force. In Canada, the resurgence of Quebecois nationalism after the Quiet Revolution, and particularly during the last few years, has pushed the 'unity issue' to national centre stage. Although the government is apparently willing to show Quebecers and other Canadians the possibility of efficient reforms, Quebec's increasingly bellicose attitude and self-asserted right to unilaterally declare independence is raising serious concern about the country's future. The sovereignist movement, and its message of independence and separation, may be interpreted as a 'civil religion' with strong political and nationalist overtones (i.e., a civil religion shifted radically towards the Rousseauan side of the continuum).

As Geertz declares, "Rather like religion, nationalism has a bad name in the modern world, rather like religion, it more or less deserves it. Between them (and sometimes in combination) religious bigotry and nationalist hatred have probably brought more havoc upon humanity than any two forces in history, and doubtless will bring a great deal more" (Geertz, 1973:253). Geertz is probably correct. This is the reason why the link between civil religion and nationalism seems to me not a "tangential" issue, but rather a question of utmost importance--one that seems not to have attracted the attention it deserves.

VI.2 Nationalism in America

In Chapter Two I discussed some of the issues relating to the origins of America national self-understanding. However, for the sake of clarity, in the context of the present discussion, I briefly return to this topic.

Unlike European nations which over a period of centuries slowly evolved into "self-conscious nationhood," the American nation, Hudson notes, seemed to "spring into existence almost overnight" (1970:xix). Before the American Revolution few believed that the colonies could ever become one people. After the Revolution, even George Washington expressed a feeling of perplexity because "the divisions had been bridged." The war of independence, seemed to "confirm the belief that independence was a design of Heaven, effected by God himself to further his own purposes for the world" (Hudson, 1970:xxi).[108] The colonists increasingly came to believe that

> by God's intention, America was destined to be a purer and freer England, strong, healthy, undefiled, and more firmly devoted to freedom. The American continent and the American people became blended in a universally accepted myth of great significance. The continent was the Promised Land. The people were Israel, escaping from Egyptian bondage, crossing a forbidding sea, living a wilderness life, until, by God's grace and their own faithfulness, the wilderness became a new Canaan. Their pilgrimage was part and parcel of God's scheme of redemption for the whole human race. Viewed from this perspective . . . the American Revolution was a religious revival . . . (Hudson, 1970:xxxiii).

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[108] I am indebted to Hudson's *Nationalism and Religion in America* (1970), and to Huntington's *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony* (1981) for the information contained in this section.

Alexis de Tocqueville was intrigued by the American experiment--a society which, according to him, comprised "all the nations of the world." "Picture to yourself . . . if you can," he asked a friend, a people "differing from one another in language, in beliefs, in opinions; in a word, a society possessing no roots, no memories, no prejudices, no routine, no common ideas, no national character, yet with a happiness a hundred times greater than our own . . . " (in Hudson, 1970:xxi).

The diversity, as Hudson notes, was not so profound as de Tocqueville imagined. At the time of the American Revolution, more than 80% of the colonists had a "common historical" heritage--they were from "British stock." English was the established language. Historical records and legal documents of the time show that English was the official language even in documents of The Dutch Reformed churches. While the new settlers identified themselves as "Virginians, Pennsylvanians, and New Yorkers rather than as Americans," most of them considered themselves "Englishmen." And while there certainly was religious diversity, it was diversity within a common tradition--Puritan Protestantism. In other words, there was a "predominant national origin" and, most importantly, a "predominant religious faith" (Hudson, 1970: xxii-xxv).

There is wide agreement amongst historians and students of American society that since their early beginnings as a nation Americans have been possessed "by an acute sense of divine election" (Cherry, 1971:vii). So to understand American national self-consciousness is to understand the religious heritage of the American people. God was fundamental to New England's self-understanding. Hence, Chesterton's famous remark that America was founded "on a creed" that preceded the establishment of a formal government. At least until World War I, "theological language, religious metaphors, and biblical allusions were as characteristic of political discourse and historical writing as they were of sermonic literature" (Hudson, 1970: xi). In fact, the Protestant

clergyman enjoyed for a great number of years a special place as a "central spokesman" for American culture and identity. The political community (American political leaders) merely echoed him. This tradition has continued even up to modern times, through men such as Reinhold Niebuhr and Martin Luther King, for example (Bellah, 1975:56).

Several basic themes gave Americans a sense of identity: 1) a tradition of a people "in covenant with a God," who was to judge, discipline, guide, and direct the American people; 2) a free people endowed with a quasi-religious devotion to liberty--the "cause of liberty" being "the cause of God"; 3) a special mission in the world--America's role as the guardian of liberty and as the "asylum" or "haven" of the oppressed"; 4) a vision of a special destiny and of "future greatness" that "God held in store for America" (Hudson, 1970:19-56). The early settlers convinced themselves they were the very embodiment of the general trend human evolution was to follow. That is, they would establish in the new world a better rational order, with greater individual liberty, and basic social equality. For this reason, America came to be regarded itself as the "trustee of these blessings for Europe and mankind" (Kohn, 1967:291, 293).

In 1850 Herman Melville described Americans as the "peculiar, chosen people," "the Israel of our time."[109] He wrote:

> ... we bear the ark of liberties of the world . . . God has given to us, for a future inheritance, the broad domains of the political pagans . . . [He] expects, great things from our race; and great things we feel in our souls. The rest of the nations must soon be in our rear . . . And let us always remember that with ourselves, almost for the first time in the history of earth,

[109] Throughout the colonial period it seems to have been quite common to speak of our "English Israel," "our British Israel," "our New English Israel," and eventually "our American Israel." Colonists really believed that "they were a chosen and covenanted people, successors to Israel of old" (Hudson, 1970:33). This is clearly reflected in the rise of Mormonism in the 1830s.

national selfishness is unbounded philanthropy; for we cannot do a good to America, but we give alms to the world (in Bellah, 1975:39).

Likewise, J. L. O'Sullivan, founder and editor of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review,* wrote : "A noble mission was entrusted to America as the City upon a Hill, the mission of going before the nations of the world as the representative of the democratic principle and as the constant living exemplar of its results . . . " (in Henry, 1979:86). As Henry rightly notes, "such a view of America's 'noble mission' and ideal foundation" involved a high degree of nationalism (1979:88).

Hence, the sentiment of being "chosen," and the idea of a 'special mission' have been important components of the American national self-understanding. Wilson has distinguished two clear patterns: the "exemplary" and the "emissary" traditions. In the former version, rooted in Puritan self-understanding, America is portrayed as "exhibiting to the world the achievement of a perfected society." The idea is to set up America as an example--as the land of liberty and democracy. That is, America provides a model which others may follow. The "emissary" version entails a "mythical pattern of national mission." Under this construct the idea is to preach a way of life to others, to bring "truth" to the rest of the world. It includes wars in defense of democracy, and crusades against atheistic communism (Wilson, 1979:29-32).[110] This model has led to the image of the United States as a "Messiah, the last 'best hope' of human kind" (Novak, 1992:288). Denis Brogan has argued rather cynically that the key "function" of the American civil religion is "not the doing on earth the will of the Christian or Jewish God, but of securing for the United States the

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[110] Wilson's model parallels Weber's distinction between two types of prophet - the 'exemplary' prophet, and the 'emisary 'or ethical prophet. In the former case, the prophet's behaviour is to be taken as a model; in the latter, followers have a duty to follow a certain way of life, or an obligation to conform to it on pain of damnation (Hamilton, 1995:142).

blessing of the God whose Chosen People is the American People" (1968:65). Myths die hard. They keep on repeating themselves like endless litanies from generation to generation. What is important for this discussion, is that this "complex of mythic materials is basic to what we may now recognize as the cultural nationalism of the new republic" (Wilson, 1979:32).[111]

In the context of American society, the connection between civil religion and nationalism presents an interesting and perhaps unique case. America was not only founded on a creed, but such a creed has defined American identity. Huntington in his excellent book *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony* (1981) claims that nationalism in the United States has been defined more in "political rather than in organic terms." Huntington argues that for most people national identity is "organic" in character. By this he means, it is "a product of a long process of historical evolution involving common ancestors, experiences, ethnic background, common language, and often common religion." This is not so in America. Here, the political ideas of the "American Creed" have provided the most fundamental basis of American national identity (Huntington, 1981:25). This was particularly true in its early beginnings as a nation, where the community was "a community decided not by blood but by faith" and united by a "fierce spirit of liberty" (Hudson, 1970:xxix, xxv). Several scholars have echoed the view that America was not formed by "natural" factors of blood or common history. Rather, it was formed by " a universal idea. Loyalty to America meant therefore loyalty to that idea . . . " (Kohn, 1967:324). This basic idea can be summarized as the right to *life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*.

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[111] Wilson argues that exemplary constructions are the source of American "isolationism" which lasted well into World War II. The "nation should remain distant from the entanglements of the world for the sake of its own continuing purity" (Wilson, 1979:30).

The main political values of the "American Creed": "liberty, equality, individualism, democracy and the rule of law under a constitution," set forth in the Declaration of Independence, are a critical element of American national identity. The other source of ideas of the political and social ethos of Americans, seventeenth-century Protestantism, added elements of "moralism, millenialism, and individualism" to the American social and political landscape. Protestant values reinforced republican and democratic ideals and "provided the underlying ethical and moral basis for American ideas on politics and society" (Huntington, 1981:15-16). Protestantism, in a sense, married the 'spirit of liberty' with the 'spirit of religion.' America's religious self-understanding and America's republican and democratic self-understandings are, in fact, inseparable.

Huntington thus claims that the United States, as a nation, originated in "a conscious political act" whereby national identity was equated with "allegiance to political principles." What distinguished Americans from their British brethren, he argues, was not religion, ethnicity, culture, or language, but the fact that America, from the moment it came into existence, held "these truths to be self-evident." This body of political ideas constitute, for Huntington, the true essence of *Americanism*. In this sense, he claims, Americanism is a religion (1981:24-25).[112]

This identification of nationality with a political ideology makes the United States "virtually unique" in the Western world. Political ideology and nationality are so intimately interwoven in America that "the disappearance of the former means the end of the latter." In Europe, by contrast, political ideology and nationalism never 'married' each other. "Ideologies expressed social class interests while nationalism expressed ethnic and linguistic communities" (1981:25-28).

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[112] Huntington writes, "It is possible to speak of a body of political ideas that constitutes 'Americanism" in a sense in which one can never speak of 'Britishim," 'Frenchism,' 'Germanism,' or 'Japanesism." He further notes, "There is no British Creed or French Creed; the Academie Francaise worries about the purity of the French language, not about the purity of French political ideas" (1989:25).

American nationalism, Huntington concludes, is, in a sense, more "intellectualized," less emotional and less irrational since political ideas and principles are at the basis of its definition. However, in comparison to "European ideologies" (such as liberalism, conservatism, and Marxism, which were linked to particular social groups and class interests), the American Creed is "less systematic and intellectualized." It "reflects a national consensus and is identified with American *nationalism*" (Huntington, 1989:29, emphasis added). Huntington sees American national identity as being "very fragile." While the political system has been remarkably stable (there has been only one Constitution and one system of government since 1776), wave after wave of immigrants have changed the nation's ethnic, religious, and cultural make up.[113] For Huntington, the danger of national disintegration in America is not to be found in ethnic warfare or the threat of separation (as, for example, in Eastern Europe at the present time, or Catalans in Spain, or Quebecers in Canada), but in "disillusionment" with its political values or political institutions. "Destroy the political system," Huntington warns, "and you will destroy the basis of community, eliminating the nation . . . " In other countries constitutions are changed, amended, re-written, but the nation remains the same. The United States "does not have that choice." Americanism implies adherence to substantive political values. This is the reason why "to be an American is an ideal; while to be a Frenchman is a fact." In the former case, national identity is defined "normatively," while in the latter case French identity is defined "existentially" (Huntington, 1981:30). Novak (1992:45) has also reflected that because America functions as a secular religion "being an American is a state of soul."

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[113] Compare this with other nations where the political system has changed several times in the course of a century. For example, the Germans have had five different systems in this century, while France, in two hundred years has had "five republics and several political systems" (Huntintgon, 1989:29). In France, between 1789 and 1870, alone, there were three monarchies, two empires and two republics (Bellah, 1973:xvi).

I am afraid that it is difficult to briefly summarize and give full credit to Huntington's eloquent and well-elaborated discussion. What is important to note is that Huntington directly links the "American Creed" (i.e., civil religion) with nationalism. Hughey has also pointed in this direction. He notes that America nationalism "has been committed far less to a territorial definition than to America as the embodiment of a national faith" (Hughey, 1992:539).

In previous chapters I have argued that what might have been true in nineteenth-century America, appears much less true today. In its early stages American nationalism contrasted itself with Europe, and celebrated enlightened, democratic, humanist ideals. Now it differentiates itself from the world, and tends to celebrate economic success. Indeed, in more recent times, being a great nation "often means having a standard of living that is the envy of other nations, or a defense system that cannot be challenged, or a governing system that other nations try to emulate." It follows, that at the end of the millenium American national self-understanding seems to involve less religious, more mundane, more materialistic and more pragmatic interests. American national self-understanding, in fact, appears to have much to do with explanations about its "power, privilege, and wealth" (Wuthnow, 1988:243). A "blatantly pragmatic" materialist ideology proclaims that "America is right because it is rich," or that Americans are "virtuous" because they are "successful" (Wuthnow, 1988:264).[114] America's position of leadership and privilege in relation to the rest of

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[114] Wuthnow has noted that opinion polls show the consistent tendency of Americans to link faith in their country to the state of the economy. The stronger the economy, the higher the public expression of satisfaction with the political machinery. "[T]he public expresses satisfaction with the country when the economy is strong, and withdraws that faith when the economy is weak." Wuthnow notes that in a 1984 Gallup survey, when the economy was booming, 50% of those polled "were satisfied with the way things were going in the United States." Yet five years earlier, when the economy was in recession, only 12% gave this response. The same polls revealed that there was a discrepancy between business managers or people with incomes of $40,000 or higher and manual workers. The former group was "twice as likely to express satisfaction" than were people with low incomes (Wuthnow, 1988:266).

the world has given rise, in turn, to the myth (or mission) that what is good for America is good on a global scale.

I do not want to imply that the political ideals of the American creed have lost all relevance. On the contrary, republican ideals are still very much a part of the American heritage. Though divorced from their religious and ethical foundations, these ideals have lost their original meaning. Individual freedom, for example, no longer means restraint and voluntary submission to authority, nor does it mean a religiously grounded obligation to do good for the community, as it meant for early Puritan Americans. Rather, "liberty" is understood today as a free ticket for the pursuit of personal gain, and the freedom to do what one wishes. In any case, modern American civil religion weaves together "patriotism, competitive individualism, and a boundless faith in the potentialities of economic growth and prosperity." The new ethos or "moral dimension" calls for a "sanctification of American society, its laissez-faire economic processes, its democratic political processes, and its military and international might" (Anthony and Robbins, 1982:216). The nation is exalted and deified through its political and economic policies, rather than through its moral and religious principles.

Summing up, the tenets of faith of American civil religion have been framed in explicitly religious symbols, and have been clothed in highly nationalist terms. The way American civil religion has been portrayed as operating (as a covenant between God and nation) tends to blur the boundary between civil religion and a religiously-informed nationalist ideology. Moreover, the claim that civil religion "is clearly an element in nation building" (McGuire, 1987:161), coupled

with Bellah's espousal of the use of civil religion as an instrumentality to achieve national goals, has helped to confound the problem even more.[115]

This should come as no surprise since, from its very beginnings in western Europe, modern nationalism has been conceived as having some of the qualities or attributes of religion (Hayes, 1960:164). So, linking *religion* proper with nationalism is not a novel idea. Sociologists have pointed out the intimate relation between nationalist and religious movements, for example. Both have an "inspirational and sometimes revivalist character." Both of them are fundamentally "cultural movements with political consequences" (Kohn, 1967:23). What is indeed surprising, is that the linkage between civil religion and nationalism has not received parallel attention. However, civil religion, since its emergence as a concept in the writings of Rousseau and Durkheim, has also partaken of the nature of nationalism.

Drawing a distinction between civil religion and nationalism, then, is not a simple task. Hayes' interesting book *Nationalism: A Religion* (1960) is a case in point. What Hayes examines under the rubric "nationalism: a religion" bears a strong resemblance with any discussion of civil religion. Hayes indicates that nationalism, like any religion "everywhere . . . has a god." It is "a god of a chosen people." Like any religion, "it calls into play not simply the will, but the intellect, the imagination, and the emotions." Like any other religion, again, nationalism is "social" and its

[115]To be sure, nationalist tendencies under the Durkheimian/Bellah tradition are neither virulent nor belligerent. But it goes without saying that in a non-democratic setting, a civil religion with strong nationalist overtones can be very disruptive and disturbing not only to a particular nation but to world peace. Consider dictatorships such as Napoleon's, or Hitler's, or Stalin's, where decisions for aggression and war relied, to a large extent, on "patriotic mass support assured by dictatorial propaganda and duress" (Hayes, 1960:175).

chief rites are public rites performed for the "salvation of a whole community." Its "driving force is a collective *faith*, a faith in its mission and destiny" (Hayes, 1960:165).[116]

Hayes further shows what he considers "striking parallels" between modern nationalism and medieval Christianity. He argues that both the "national State" and the "universal Church" are endowed with a mission of salvation. Just as Christianity adapted some festivals from paganism, modern nation-states have borrowed heavily from the Christian Church. Secular rites tend to emulate religious rites. The secular registration of birth, for instance, would represent the national rite of baptism. National heroes rest in "sacred shrines." Public rites and ceremonies take on a quasi-liturgical form. The quasi-liturgical form for "saluting," "dipping," "lowering" or "hoisting" the flag is a case in point.[117] Modern nationalism has "its processions and pilgrimages," its holy days and its temples too. In the United States, Hayes notes, the "Fourth of July is a nationalist Christmas, Flag Day an adaptation of Corpus Christi, and . . . Veteran's Day a patriotic version of All Souls Day, while in imitation of the saints' days of the Christian calendar are observed the birthdays of national saints and heroes, such as Washington and Lincoln" (Hayes, 1960:165-167).

Clearly, civil religion incorporates much of the same range of phenomena identified by Hayes as the religion of nationalism. Consider, for example, the 'striking parallels' between Haye's description of modern nationalism and Bellah's portrayal of civil religion. Wilson summarizes some of the elements of Bellah's model: the most salient symbolic content is America's mission of

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[116] In line with my argument that historians, philosophers, political scientists have been more sensitive than sociologists to the implications and ramifications of the civil religion concept, it should be noted that Hayes is an historian, not a sociologist, and so is Huntington, who, as I have already noted, also links the American Creed with nationalism.

[117] Consider U.S. flag etiquette: 1) no flag may fly higher than U.S. flag in the U.S.; 2) the U.S. flag may not be lowered in salute, at home or abroad, or before a foreign head of state; 3) the U.S. flag may not touch the ground, or be shown or treated in disrepute, etc.

salvation and the idea of the "American nation carrying out God's will on earth." Bellah has also identified a series of "religious figures," heroes or martyrs, "specific events," sacred shrines or places and sacred rituals such as "deferential behavior toward the flag and civic officials, solemn proceedings on Memorial Day or the Fourth of July . . . " (Wilson, 1974:127-129, see also Chapter Two).

Critics have sporadically charged that Bellah's notion of civil religion represents a glorification or the worship of the American nation, but no serious attempt has been made to approach Bellah's work from the standpoint of nationalism. It should be evident, however, that the symbiotic relationship between nationalism and civil religion is very noticeable in the United States. If the religion of nationalism has borrowed from Christianity, American civil religion has borrowed from both Christianity and nationalism. Like most nationalisms, American civil religion also "appeals to man's 'religious sense'"(Hayes, 1960:177). Derived mostly from events in American history, civil religion includes the belief in the American-Israel theme and the ascription of sacred meanings to secular symbols (Kim, 1993; Wilson, 1971, Richey and Jones, 1974). It tends to sacralize and exalt national sentiments and national myths. It makes quasi-religious claims (both implicit and explicit) about American national character, about the correctness of its actions, and of its place in history and in the world. In short, it is a celebration of the nation's culture and "way of life." These claims certainly are important components of cultural nationalism. They provide the most fundamental assumptions on which the nation, and its political order, is legitimated. For legitimation not only means "tacit acceptance of the nation and its policies" but also a certain "degree of loyalty to, or conviction about," the nation's destiny, mission, procedures and political goals (Wuthnow, 1988:242). Finally, the outcome of civil religion mirrors the outcome of the

religion of nationalism. That is, a "nationalist theology of intellectuals becomes a nationalist mythology for the masses" (Hayes, 1960:168). In the case of nationalism, Hayes tells us, this usually occurs when national and religious emotions are fused and nationalism itself becomes "a religion or a substitute for religion" (Hayes, 1960:9-10). It seems to me that in the final analysis, civil religion, at least in its cultural form (the Durkhemian variety), is indistinguishable from cultural nationalism. Both stress collective identity; both refer to the ethos of a people, both are a "state of mind" (Kohn, 1967:11). Needless to say, the political ideological form (the Rousseauan variety) might also emphasize nationalism as the locus for civic-religious practices.

What constitutes national identity is an old and unresolved debate. Scholars have been attempting to define national identity or "national character" ever since national consciousness first emerged in the eighteenth century (Kohn, 1967). It is not my intention to enter into a debate about the exact meaning of national identity. What is at issue here is the relationship between civil religion and nationalism. My concern is the degree to which values, beliefs, and ideas of the American "creed" or civil religion in general, can be identified with, or are manifestations of nationalism.

VI.3 The Structural Ambivalence of Civil Religion

In Chapter Three I covered the problem of legitimacy and argued that it could be strengthened by appealing to national sentiments (Kokosalakis, 1985:374; Wuthnow, 1988; Richardson, 1974).[118] Richardson explicitly notes the crucial role of nationalism as a legitimizing

[118] Witness, for example, the rallying of public opinion, the national pride, the enthusiasm and the media coverage that the victory in the Gulf War received.

factor. He claims that political power in the United States often tends to be legitimated through "appeals to the beliefs and values of a religiously informed nationalist ideology," whereby the nation becomes the object of glorification taking a self-transcendent character. The "religionizing of the nation and politics" is at the heart of Richardson's discussion of civil religion in America (Richardson, 1974). Some scholars, as Jones and Richey point out, have referred to this kind of civil religion as "the religion of patriotism" (1974:16).

Richardson has linked the power of modern states to the "process of 'nationalism.'" States are composed of different cultural groups or nations, each competing for power against the state or against each other, to retain a degree of autonomy in pursuing its own goals. He argues that when nation-states began to emerge in Europe, the identification of the state's interests became linked with the interests of "its more powerful constituent nations: the German state with Prussia, the Soviet state with Russia, and the United States with the 'north.'" This association was usually sanctioned by the creation of a strong and complex "national-political ideology, or national civil religion" (Richardson, 1974:168). In such cases, the history, culture, and destiny of a nation is "appropriated" by the state and its dominant culture or group. Inevitably, other cultural groups are either ignored or suppressed so that the dominant culture be imposed throughout the nation.[119] For example, Richardson notes that the birth of American nationalism, and its accompanying civil religion, went through two stages: an "inward" and an "outward" stage. The former was concerned

[119] This is the type of ideology or civil religion which emerged during the American Civil War. The "American state identified its interests with those of its northern nation and the Yankees successfully imposed their culture, commercial interests and ideology to every corner of the nation and to every new immigrant entering the promised land." Attempts by Catholics and other groups to preserve their heritage, language, religion, and values were "persistently undermined by the state." As a result, white anglo-saxon America created its own history and "rendered invisible blacks, nisei, chicanos, and other peoples who were unlikely candidates for Puritan forefathers." By identifying the interests of the nation with the interests of its most powerful national group, competition for social power is dissolved (Wilson, 1979). This is what Richardson has called "the method of nationalism," which, he notes, is "no different in America from elsewhere" (Richardson, 174:169).

with domestic policy and a strong attempt to "force a melting pot" culture. The main concern of the latter, on the other hand, was "foreign policy" and the incorporation of other states "within the web of its culture and commerce." Not by "mere coincidence," Richardson notes, "the American Civil War was followed by an American imperial age" (Richardson, 1974:168-169).

What is interesting to note, is that although civil religion seems to provide an ideological framework for nationalism, a number of scholars have repeated the claim that civil religion is not an idolatrous worship of the nation. Mead emphatically insists that the "religion of the Republic" does not mean worship of the state or nation (Mead, 1974:60, 62). Bellah has also repeatedly maintained that civil religion is not a form of national self-worship and political chauvinism. He writes, " . . . the American civil religion is not the worship of the American nation but an understanding of the American experience in the light of ultimate and universal reality . . . " (Bellah, 1967:18). Elsewhere he insists that civil religion "is not a form of national self-worship but . . . the subordination of the nation to ethical principles that transcend it and in terms of which it should be judged" (Bellah, 1970:168). In a similar vein, Novak notes that civil religion "is not the same as the glorification of the status quo; it is not the absolutizing of 'the American way of Life'" (1992:145). For Hughes, it is not "intrinsically idolatrous" (1980:76). In short, most students of American civil religion have taken the position that civil religion in America "is not to be equated with crass American nationalism" (Wilson, 1974:119).

Despite Bellah's repeated claims, he too has recognized that American civil religion "can be idolatrous" at times. This occurs, he argues, "when the gap between the nation and its ideals is closed, so that the dimension of transcendence is lost and America falls into laudatory self-congratulation." The problem is that Bellah assumes that when this happens (i.e., when the 'gap is

closed'), it is a *misuse* of civil religion (in Durkheimian terms a 'pathology'). The logic of his arguments allows him to conclude that "Richard Nixon. . . misused civil religion: but Abraham Lincoln and John Kennedy used it properly" (in Richardson, 1974:164).[120] Bellah insists that "merely to attack" civil religion as no more than a "vulgar" form of nationalism is to ignore, or fail to perceive, "its profound and indispensable contribution to maintaining a cohesive and viable national society." In other words, he assumes that while civil religion may be, occasionally "abused for chauvinistic ends, [it] confronts the nation with a potential judgement over nationalistic idolatry" (Stauffer, 1975:390). This means that insofar as there is a 'pathology' or 'deviance' it is not to be found in civil religion *per se*, but rather in the 'errors' of those responsible for its proper functioning.

But, as Richardson rightly notes, the *misuse* of civil religion is not merely the result of some individuals using it "improperly." Rather, such misuse is very likely to be engendered by, or be part of "the very structure of civil religion itself." I agree with Richardson's comments that "the pretensions of American nationalism, the national self-idolization," are not civil religion's pathology, error, or malfunctioning. They are the unavoidable "expression" of civil religion itself (in Jones and Richey, 1974:11). The so-called "misuse" would have little to do with usage and more to do with

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[120] For more on Nixon's civil religious rhetoric, see Henderson (1972); Wimberley (1975); Donahue (1975); Alley (1972). These authors argue that Nixon used a rhetoric capable of establishing both a political and a religious identity with the "new majority" in the electorate. His civil religious discourse has been characterized as "priestly," that is, more comforting than judgmental (Donahue, 1975:57). In referring to Nixon, Henderson (1972:27) describes him as illustrating perfectly the "curious inbreeding of patriotism and piety, the Protestant ethic, and liberal pragmatism that has been so pervasive in this nation's history." Nixon, he notes, "vibrates to the rhythms of American folk religion." He does this, by systematically appropriating "the vocabulary of the church--faith, trust, hope, belief, spirit--and applies these words not to a transcendent God but to his own nation, and worse, to his personal vision of what that nation should be . . . " (Henderson, 1972:193). Wimberley's data (1975) showed an association between civil religious orientation, specially the nationalistic arch-conservative aspects of Republicanism, and support for Nixon in 1972.

the way civil religion 'works.' This would mean that the idolatry of the nation is a natural expression or an inevitable aspect of any civil religion (Jones and Richey, 1974:11).

Bellah has asserted that one of the most important aspects of American civil religion has been, and still is, to affirm that a higher morality underlies civil laws. This means that "civil power stands under the sovereignty of God and that the nation must judge its own acts in the light of divine righteousness" (Richardson, 1974:164). Bellah's claim is not without its problems. Richardson notes the inherent "built-in doubleness" of Bellah's "transcendental" construct or of any such model. He expresses it this way: "If finite characteristics are ascribed to what is infinite, we will also claim infinite characteristics for what is finite." So, by seeking to relate "American politics to God's sovereignty, we are also relating God's sovereignty to American politics" (Richardson, 1974:164). If we accept Richardson's argument, and I do, then the sacralization of the nation is not only "inevitable," but it is a defining characteristic of civil religion itself (if understood at a national level). Richardson is quite unambiguous about this. He writes: the "best" politics in America "always become idolatrous," so it seems "ironic that American civil religion always tends to generate the very situation it seeks to prevent" (Richardson, 1974:165).

In *The Broken Covenant*, which is a reformulation of his earliest work, Bellah clearly takes a prophetic role, and comes closer to assigning a nationalist role to civil religion. Due to the social and political problems caused by the Vietnam war (a war that Bellah opposed), he admits that "today the American civil religion is an empty and broken shell." Americans, he laments, have lost their sense of direction, the covenant has been betrayed by high political officials, and American society "is to the edge of the abyss" (1975:141-158) Bellah writes, "no one has changed a nation without appealing to its soul, without stimulating a national idealism, as even those who call

themselves materialists have discovered. Culture is the key to revolution; religion is the key to culture. If we win the political struggle, we will not even know that we want unless we have a new vision of man, a new sense of human possibility, and a new conception of the ordering of liberty, the constitution of freedom" (1975:162). If my reading of Bellah is correct, it follows that he is assuming that civil religion, if "well-used," may be used as an instrumentality of nationalism, of the right kind. What America needs is to "reaffirm" the covenant, and recover the republican civil religion in its most classical form (1975:151). But who is to decide if civil religion is well-used or misused? How can we prevent the use of civil religion by high officials to exalt and glorify certain groups to the exclusion of others? How can we prevent a totalitarian form of nationalism from developing?

Several scholars refer to Bellah or quote him on this issue (that civil religion has nothing to do with national self-glorification), but leave unanswered the question of whether civil religion is or is not the worship of the nation (Stauffer, 1973:415; Wimberley and Christenson, 1980:35). Others, few in number and often not sociologists, recognize the danger of civil religion becoming a "self-glorifying" and politically useful nationalism, "as it does when a particular regime or policy is defended in civil religious terms as an absolute, unquestionable good" (Wuthnow, 1994:131, 149). Still others, such as Coleman (1969) and Richey and Jones (1974) do not conceive civil religion *per se* as encouraging nationalist tendencies, but only certain types.

In Coleman's view (1969:72-73), nationalist tendencies and praxis are found in totally desacralized civil religions, in what he calls *secular nationalism*, which he associates only with authoritarian, un-democratic regimes. He conceives secular nationalism as a "functional alternative" to civil religions. It provides a legitimating symbol system which comes to replace

religious symbol systems. Coleman argues that secular nationalisms emerge in situations where traditional religion is too closely tied to a pre-revolutionary regime.

I alluded to Coleman's typologies of civil religion in Chapter Two: let me briefly consider it here again to clarify this idea. According to Coleman (1969) civil religions in western society have taken an evolutionary pattern. This pattern of evolution follows a three-fold phase: undifferentiated (either state-sponsored or church-sponsored), secular nationalism, and civil religion differentiated both from church and state. Undifferentiated stands for the most "primitive" type of civil religion, as was the case in State Shinto in Japan in the 1800s at the time of the Meiji restoration, or in cases where the church performs the role of civil religion.[121] As for secular nationalism, he mentions three cases: the ex-Soviet Union, Turkey after the Ataturk's revolution, whereby political nationalism came to serve as civil religion replacing Islam, and France, during the French Revolution. Coleman implies that the sacralization of a nation in cases such as these leads inevitably to outcomes not compatible with a democratic system.

It seems obvious from Coleman's discussion that he sees American civil religion as in no danger of ever becoming self-glorifying nationalism. After all, Coleman approaches the issue in evolutionary terms. Social evolution and differentiation are "concomitant" concepts, so he expects religious evolution to parallel general cultural evolution. In his eyes, the civil religion found in America represents the "most advanced" stage of evolution; it "uniquely" illustrates the case of a differentiated civil religion. The "peculiar genius" of American civil religion, he claims, is to be "general enough" to embrace all religions and peoples and "specific" enough to provide a "clear statement of the role and destiny" of every American as a citizen, and of the nation "in relation to

[121] Coleman claims that examples of the church performing the role of civil religion can be found throughout Latin America. This claim cannot be accepted without qualifications (see Cristi and Dawson, 1996).

questions of ultimate meaning and existence" (Coleman, 1969:76-77). One may add that, in his eyes, American civil religion is "advanced enough" not to be equated with crude nationalism.

Coleman detects some major difficulties in cases of undifferentiated civil religions sponsored by the church, and in cases of secular nationalism: the danger that civil and religious liberties of minorities will be jeopardized, the failure to provide integrating national symbols for the religious minorities, and the undue pressures exerted on the national loyalties of the religious and other minorities. Coleman fails to realize that what he attributes to undifferentiated types of civil religion (exclusion of minorities, clash of loyalties, etc.) are problems endemic to any civil religion, American civil religion included.[122] This failure on his part should come as no surprise, for Coleman is one of those scholars who insist that "by definition" American civil religion is a religious system "given to the social integration of society" (Coleman, 1969:76).

In other words, the 'problem' is not to be found, as Coleman suggests, in the evolutionary phases of civil religion. Rather, it is more a result of the structural characteristics of civil religion itself, and of the pluralist nature of most modern nation-states. Most modern societies embrace a variety of ethnic groups that do not share a common historical past or common values. The history that civil religion interprets and represents is often the history of the dominant culture. Moreover, by linking only a specific type of civil religion to nationalism, Coleman also fails to realize that any civil religion, at any stage of its "evolution," (American civil religion included) may inevitably encourage and foster nationalist tendencies. Simply put, the nationalist impulse may come to dominate the language, rhetoric, ideals, values and beliefs of the discourse of any civil religion.

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[122] See especially Chapter Two. Schoffeleers (1978:20) has also pointed out that it is doubtful that Americans of African and Indian descent would subscribe to the "theology" and "history of salvation" formulated by the Americans of European descent. He writes, "what is seen by the latter as a journey to the promised land was to the former the way to a profoundly degrading life of slavery."

Religious nationalism and/or civil religion may be used to justify and legitimize either the *status quo* or to advance a particular political agenda. Some scholars have noted, for example, that the present "revival of religion in America suits perfectly well American nationalism" (Kokosalakis, 1985:371). Others have also observed that, in recent years, Conservative Protestantism in the United States has borrowed the civil religious discourse, showing a strong tendency to articulate its political demands in religious-nationalistic terms. Conservative Protestantism not only shrouds its political demands in nationalist terms, but links "the a priori approval of the Almighty with the actions of the American body politics" (Demerath and Williams, 1985:164-165, see also Wuthnow, 1988). Demerath and Williams, however, do not relate this to a "structural problem" of civil religion. Instead, they seem to agree with Bellah's idea on the "misuse" of civil religion. They, thus, claim that the "rhetorical display of patriotism and national pride are a form of bravado from a confused body politic rather a true reaffirmation of civil religion itself" (1985:164).

Likewise, Jones and Richey have detected five meanings or interpretations of civil religion found in the literature, only three of which are relevant to this discussion: 1) *folk religion*, 2) *the transcendent universal religion of the nation, and* 3) *religious nationalism.* The main representative of the folk-type civil religion is Will Herberg. He tends to see the "common religion of Americans descriptively as emerging out of the life of the folk" (Richey and Jones, 1974:15). Folk religion is *the American Way of Life* or *Americanism*--a system of ideas, values and beliefs that constitutes a "faith common to Americans as Americans." Sociologically, Herberg notes, it is the American religion, "undergirding American national life and overarching American society." He further claims that the American Way of Life is a "civil religion in the strictest sense of the term, for in it, national life is apotheized, national values are religionized, national heroes are divinized, national history is

experienced as a *Heilsgeschichte*, as a redemptive history" (Herberg, 1974:77-78). It has a political, social, economic, and spiritual dimension, all of which exalt national ideals and national unity. It is embodied in the Constitution, it glorifies free enterprise, egalitarianism, and individualism. In its spiritual dimension it refers to the central place ("high valuation") given to religion. The most fundamental character of this civil religion is the "religionization" of the nation and its culture (1974:80). Needless to say, for Herberg the charge that civil religion is inherently idolatrous "does indeed hold." He claims that to see America's civil religion as a religion somehow "standing above or beyond the biblical religions of Judaism and Christianity, and Islam too, as somehow including them and finding a place for them in its overarching unity," inevitably becomes an idolatrous faith (Herberg, 1974:87).

Mead is the best-known proponent of the *transcendent universal religion of the nation.* Referring to the religion of the American society of the late nineteenth century, Mead writes: this religion "was articulated in terms of the destiny of America, under God, to be fulfilled by perfecting the democratic way of life for the example and betterment of mankind" (Mead, 1963:135). As a result of religious freedom, no religion could claim to be, or function as "the church" in America, so "*the nation came more and more so to function,*" giving rise to what he calls the religion of the Republic (Mead, 1974:66). But, as mentioned earlier, Mead emphatically denies that the "religion of the Republic" means the deification or sacralization of the American nation. However, his model of a transcendent religion both, implicitly and explicitly, foments nationalist sentiments and sacralizes the nation.

The third meaning of civil religion is indicated by the phrase *religious nationalism.* Jones and Richey associate it with the work of Charles Henderson (1972), critic of Richard M. Nixon's

"theology" or civil religion. Although they do not mention Hayes's work, it certainly belongs in this category. Hayes, as we have already seen, considers American nationalism "a religion." The nation itself becomes the object of adoration, taking a self-transcendent character.

The point to be made is that Jones and Richey see only certain "types" of civil religion as associated, directly or indirectly, with a nationalist ideology. However, as mentioned earlier, the spirit of civil religion and the spirit of nationalism cannot always be easily dissociated. Civil religion, particularly in its Durkheimian form, and cultural nationalism, are comparable in their methods, 'functions,' and goals. Both define a nation's most fundamental purposes and aspirations, and both provide the basic definition of who are the *chosen* ones, that is "who belongs to the nation and who does not" (Wuthnow, 1994:131).[123] To be sure, civil religion's nationalist tendencies may be aggravated in response to particular national and historical circumstances. These tendencies may also be dependent on, or vary according to, a particular political regime (democratic and undemocratic), and the use of the civil religious discourse made by politically powerful individual.[124] In line with my argument that the symbols of civil religion are vulnerable to

[123] Purposes may be defined in economic terms, or in terms of national security, participation in international wars, etc. As for 'who belongs to the nation,' this depends on specific historical or political circumstances. At one moment in history this "definition" was restricted only to "white, male, property holders who [were] members in good standing of their churches" (Wuthnow, 1994:131).

[124] In the late sixties, for example, American 'patriotic piety' was subjected to severe criticism, as there was a generalized sense of loss of faith in the nation. The United States underwent a series of upheavals involving student protests against the Vietnam War, racial conflict, oil shortages, Watergate, and even corporate scandals. Theodore White, a distinguished American historian, observes: "In 1968 this faith [in the nation] was to be shattered--the myth of American power broken, the confidence of the American people in their government, their institutions, their leadership, shaken as never before since 1860" (in Sandel, 1996:295). Yet, at this very same time the civil religious discourse and its "nationalist rhetoric took a sharp flight." Both George McGovern and Richard Nixon 'used' civil religious language while campaigning. McGovern, even more clearly than Nixon, enunciated a version of civil religion "replete with Bible quotations and reference to the great symbols and events of the civil tradition." Bellah argues, however, that his was a quite different version than the one expressed by Nixon. McGovern's was more in tune with the traditional civil religion of America (Bellah, 1974:264). I reproduce here some passages of Nixon's inaugural address: "Above all else, the time has come for us to renew our faith in ourselves and in America....In recent years, that faith has been challenged. Our children have been taught to be ashamed of their country, ashamed of their parents,

manipulation for political ends, it should surprise no one that intellectuals, politicians, and others may attempt a variety of political strategies or solutions, including nationalistic appeals. This means that any civil religion may try to arouse and exploit popular patriotic sentiments for political ends.[125] Civil religion, in short, may shift its balance, becoming either more political, more religious, or more nationalistic depending on particular national circumstances. Perhaps this is another reason why civil religious endeavors appear to be short-lived "with periods of weakness and ultimate failure, although not necessarily total disappearance" (Markoff and Regan, 1981:348).

To sum up, the myths of American civil religion constitute a strong blend of biblical and nationalist imagery. Rites and rituals, saints and martyrs, are associated with national heroes, national accomplishments, national holidays, and national historical events. Civil religion's myths are a powerful ingredient in American nationalism (Henderson, 1975:474). As Wilson writes, there have been "mythic elements within the [American] culture amounting to a religious sanction for the national polity" (1979:20). In short, if what has been described and analyzed in this chapter as civil religion is not the 'method of nationalism' (to borrow Richardson's phrase), it is without any doubt its spirit.

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ashamed of America's record at home and its role in the world...At every turn, we have been beset by those who find everything wrong with America and little that is right...America's record in this century has been unparalleled in the world's history for its responsibility, for its generosity, for its creativity and for its progress. ...Let us be proud that in each of the four wars in which we have engaged in this century, including the one we are now bringing to an end, we have fought not for selfish advantage, but to help others resist aggression. Let us be proud that by our bold, new initiatives, and by our steadfastness for peace with honour, we have made a breakthrough toward creating in the world what the world has not known before....We shall answer to God, to history, and to our conscience for the way in which we use these years" (in Bellah, 1974:259-260). While Nixon tried to resurrect the "old myth of American innocence" (Schoffeleers, 1978:20), Bellah considers Nixon's vision of America "inadequate" and "tragic," and the Nixonian version of civil piety "equally inadequate" (Bellah, 1974:261-262).

[125] For more on civil religion in the context of presidential politics, see, for example, Henderson's *The Nixon Theology* (1973), and his article "Civil Religion and the American Presidency" (1975).

Berger's reflection that the process of secularization in America has produced a "political religion that resembles more a national ideology than a transcendent religion," seems to me quite correct (Berger, 1961:52).[126] Leo Pfeffer has stated, perhaps sarcastically, that "idealistically, not realistically," it is true as Bellah has repeatedly insisted that "American civil religion is not the worship of the American nation but an understanding of the American experience in the light of ultimate universal reality." However, he reflects that "the more civil religion is used to pursue national purposes, the less true [Bellah's claim] will be" (1968:364). It should be stressed that emphasis on the instrumental aspect of civil religion (i.e., a national ideology to pursue national or political goals), does not preclude understanding civil religion as culture-bound (i.e., loyalties and ideas expressed in everyday life concerning a people's national identity, values, and traditions).

The analysis presented in this chapter demonstrates that there is a certain affinity between civil religion and nationalism. This affinity may bring about ominous consequences (ethnic cleansing, antisemitism, etc.), depending on whether or not civil religion (and its nationalist 'tendencies') ceases to be a cultural phenomenon and adopts the character of a political and nationalist ideology serving the vested interests of a particular social or ethnic group. It should be obvious, therefore, that whether or not one finds this relationship alarming depends on the type of nationalism the civil religious rhetoric advocates. The key point here is whether the civil religion rhetoric promotes social and cultural integration or whether it demands political, cultural, or ethnic segregation. It seems to me that the Durkheimian/Rousseauan axis that characterizes the civil

[126] Berger does not use the term "civil religion" but he describes forms of American "cultural" and "political" religion. Cultural religion is based on profoundly shared American values and it serves to reinforce cultural integration. Political religion (a manifestation of cultural religion but within the polity), performs the function of social control (Berger, 1961:39-72).

religion phenomenon may also be valuable for explaining the shift from cultural to political nationalism.

Conclusion

Durkheim versus Rousseau Revisited

The discussion of the preceding chapters makes it readily apparent that the notion of civil religion, as it appears in the literature, has been too narrowly conceived.[127] Scholars have put too much emphasis on the religious and cultural aspect of the concept and not enough attention has been given to its political dimension. As a result, there has been little attempt to understand the political and ideological forces which shape civil religion. The problem, as I have argued, stems from a lack of conceptual understanding of the civil religion phenomenon in its wide variety of forms and manifestations. So, at the risk of belaboring the point, and tiring the reader, I will have to go back, once more, to the problem of 'origins' of the concept--an issue that emerged at the very onset of the thesis, and that has appeared and re-appeared in different chapters. Indeed, I have insisted throughout that a comparison along the Durkheimian-Rousseauan continuum is essential for a proper understanding of the civil religion phenomenon, particularly if it is to be applied cross-culturally, or from one era to another within the same society. It is also essential so that we can critically examine politically motivated 'uses' of civil religion wherever they occur (including in American society).

[127] For an excellent critique and broader interpretation of the concept of civil religion, see Wilson (1979).

Williams (1996:368) discusses and reviews two approaches often used to explain religion's involvement in political life: religion *as culture* and religion *as ideology*. He notes that, while in some studies culture and ideology are "conflated," in others the two notions are treated "as mutually exclusive" modes of the religio-political phenomena. Williams argues for an analytical distinction between culture and ideology, but emphasizes the need to see their "interactive and often complementary natures." His central thesis is that religion, conceptualized as "a political resource," is both culture and ideology. This distinction, he notes, has both theoretical and empirical significance for the study of politics and group action. Conceptualizing religion either as culture or as ideology helps to understand "the varied ways religion affects politics and political action" (Williams, 1996:377).

The culturalist approach emphasizes individuals' beliefs and values and an "implicit" definition of culture. Religion as *culture* "influences political relationships because religion is central in the creation of symbolic worlds." As a cultural system religion provides a clear sense of *what is* as well as *what ought to be*. Religion in this sense, is "less about beliefs" and more "about the meaning in the world." Williams notes that "to absorb a religious world view is to absorb a set of taken-for-granted assumptions about one's duty to God and society." In this sense, religion as culture "affects life behind the backs of participants . . . its influence is often effective without the active awareness of those experiencing it" (Williams, 1996:370).

There is another way of looking at religion--as an "explicit ideology" rather than as an "implicit culture." *Ideology* is used not with a negative valuation, or derogatory connotation. That is, it is understood not as a "distortion of reality," nor in the sense of something powerful groups "do to" powerless groups, not even in terms of "false consciousness." Williams conceives ideology

as "belief systems--articulated sets of ideas that are primarily cognitive . . . primarily articulated by a specific social class/group, which function primarily in the interests of that class or group, and yet are presented as in the 'common good' or as generally accepted . . . " (Williams and Demerath, 1991:426-27, in Williams, 1996:374). As Williams notes, this definition separates ideology from culture, links ideology to issues of power and privilege, but recognizes at the same time that ideologies are not the patrimony of only powerful groups, for "many groups may develop ideologies." Ideology, in this sense, is an 'organizing principle' that regulates political understandings. It is, in fact, he argues, a "system of meaning" which emerges during times of crisis, when other "cultural systems" weaken and are unable to handle social turmoil and change. Ideology, in short, "is the articulated idea systems that emerge when culture 'fails.'" Ideology is intended to "reorder" society and "mobilize" collective action (Williams, 1996:371, 374). In other words, ideologies are "highly articulated, *self-conscious* symbol systems that promote a *general* ordering of human relations . . . " (emphasis added, Evans, 1996:19). As Williams notes, the usefulness of this analytical distinction, and its "normative" implications for understanding religion and politics are fundamental.

Williams' excellent discussion is particularly relevant to an analysis of civil religion.[128] Indeed, parallels can easily be drawn between Williams' model for studying religion and politics, and the study of civil religion. When we think of civil religion "as culture" we are right at the center of the Durkheimian camp. Civil religion thus conceptualized refers to a set of taken-for-granted assumptions about one's society or group. As a "cultural system" it provides a world view or the ethos of a nation or a collectivity. It is assumed to give citizens/individuals an identity, a moral

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[128] I am heavily indebted to William's article in this section. I have borrowed and applied his interesting ideas on the role of religion *proper* to my analysis of civil religion.

meaning and a vision, allowing them to become part of a "moral community." It refers to the religious dimension of a people's cultural identity. Identity is to be found in the social (i.e., collective social understandings). Like religion proper, it helps to establish a clear sense of "what is" as well as "what ought to be." It provides "frameworks of intelligibility," or "frameworks of self-understanding" for individual and collective life (Wilson, 1979:94). Durkheimians would argue that civil religion emerges from the culture itself and forms deeply held and shared values that are the basis for social cohesion. Culture-wide religious values are, so to speak, "naturally" or "spontaneously" translated into features of the socio-political system. Moreover, the "ordering of relations among societal members," which Williams considers "part of the essence" of both politics and religion, is also "part of the essence" of civil religion.

When Williams argues that religion affects political life "behind the back" of participants, so that those experiencing its influence are not actively aware of it, one is very much reminded of the way civil religion is conceptualized by Durkheim--as a cultural given rather than as something calculated and imposed upon citizens. The cultural approach appeals more to "common sense" beliefs about one's society or group. Ann Swidler has defined common sense as "a set of assumptions so *unselfconscious* as to seem a natural, transparent, undeniable part of the structure of the world" (Swidler, 1986:279). In his original essay, Bellah himself explicitly acknowledges "reifying and giving a name to something that, though pervasive enough when you look at it, has gone on only semiconsciously . . . " (1967:12). Civil religion as culture (or civic piety) exists, so to speak, "as a reality at the threshold of consciousness, if not below it, and is only vaguely perceived from time to time by members of the society as self-conscious behaviour." The fact that it is largely

"implicit rather than explicit," Wilson notes, indicates how important it is for society (Wilson, 1979:83).

This is no doubt the classic position adopted by Durkheim, in the sense that every society has a religious dimension or is "naturally" represented to itself as sacred. Since the collectivity is the sacred object, "a religious dimension or aspect of social life exists without reference to the self-consciousness or intentionality of the members of the social group" (Wilson, 1979:150). It expresses itself in terms of ceremonials and rituals, and it points to the religio-political behavioral patterns of the collectivity. That is, it refers to "distinctive patterns of behavior which confirm membership in the culture" (Wilson, 1979:88). Finally, it is the result of a "gradual and spontaneous" elaboration rather than of a "conscious political determination" (De Azevedo, 1979:9). This would imply that civil religion of the Durkheimian variety, is more "diffuse," and often integrates cultural elements in an unofficial or semi-official way (Ginner, 1993:42). Symbols, rituals, feelings, beliefs, and values are more important than ideas.

By contrast, civil religion as *ideology* is primarily concerned with "rights, duties, and obligations" where symbols and functions play a minor role. As Wilson writes, "this is the classical language of political thought" (Wilson, 1979:160). Conceptualized this way, civil religion refers to *imposed* "organizing principles" required to regulate political understandings and good citizenship. So, when we think of civil religion as an "explicit" ideology we are at the heart of the Rousseauan camp. Here, its organizing principles and the ordering of political existence are imposed on people "from the top down" (Demerath and Williams, 1985:156). Indeed, civil religion as ideology, fits quite well Swidler's definition of ideology in general: a "highly articulated, *self-conscious* belief

and ritual system, aspiring to offer a unified answer to problems of social action" (1986:279, emphasis added).

In civil religions of the Rousseauan variety the ideological component is, thus, more explicit, and it is directly linked to the political order. It is a religion designed for the support of the state. Accordingly, it requires state control and it demands citizens' obedience. Beliefs and behaviors signify "loyalty to a sharply defined political structure--indeed, in the extreme case, to a particular regime at a particular time" (Wilson, 1979:163). This means that it may even emerge to support a particular political party, or a particular political authority. 'Primordial loyalties' and identity are to be found in the political, specifically in citizenship. That is, it locates the individual in relation to his civic and political obligations (Apter, 1963:90). Civil religion as ideology requires a more specific, sustained, and serious effort to impose its tenets of faith. In its more extreme version, its aim is total mobilization and/or total control of the national community. In the Rousseauan model ideas are more important than feelings.

Ideologies tend to arise during times of "cultural crisis" when "patterns of meaning (with regard to politics) fail to keep the world in some sort of interpretive order." [129] In a Geertzian sense, ideologies are "cultural responses." They are also descriptions of "what is" as well as "what ought" to be, and are potentially available to any group in society (Williams, 1996:371). Ideologies, to a certain extent, need to be "inscribed into the collective memories" and need to be "taught" to group members (Evans, 1996:20). Now, the "dynamics of ideology," as Selznick argues, "are not *inherently* pathological." The mere fact that a system of beliefs, or a coherent doctrine tries to endorse group interest, to provide a basis for collective action and collective goals, is "neither

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[129] It is worth bearing in mind that Bellah claims that American civil religion has been molded in "times of trial."

harmful nor repugnant in itself." It is only when "ideologies harden," when they "explicitly demand . . . commitment" that a "destructive virus takes hold." Every ideology, however, "carries some risk of creating a closed world . . . impenetrable in conviction, mindless in obedience, fierce in hatred of heresy and opposition" (Selznick, 1992:410).

Swidler has proposed a model for analyzing cultural influence on individuals, collectivities or groups. She notes that culture "affects action" in different ways in "settled" versus "unsettled" periods. Ways of behaving during "settled" times have a taken-for-granted quality. Under these circumstances, culture acts as a model "*of*" and as a model "*for*" *experience* (Swidler, 1986:279). During "settled" times "culture 'holds' people, binding them to legitimate ways of acting, thinking, and feeling." This means that during "settled" periods culture "indirectly" influences action "by providing resources from which people can construct diverse lines of action" (Williams, 1996:371).

However, during "unsettled" cultural periods new ways of apprehending and interpreting reality arise. Ideologies come to play "a powerful role in organizing social life" during these times (Williams, 1996:371). As a result, different ideologies and new "styles or strategies of action" are addressed by competing groups contending for influence. What group or ideology will "survive in the long run depends on structural opportunities for action." Hence, during unsettled cultural periods explicit ideologies "directly govern action" (Swidler, 1986:273). During "settled" times people are "held by" one's cultural beliefs, whereas during "unsettled" periods people "come to hold" "explicit, articulated, [and] highly organized meaning systems." In short, they come to hold ideologies (Swidler, 1986:279, see Williams, 1996:371).

The Durkheimian variety of civil religion, understood as a cultural force, has a "taken-for-granted" character. It lives, so to speak, in "settled" periods. In Geertzian terms it refers to the

"assumed 'givens' of social existence," what he calls "primordial attachments" (Geertz, 1973:259). Its power to shape or direct human action is rather weak. As an "ideology," however, civil religion loses its taken-for-granted character. Under such circumstances, it has, or at least it is intended to have, a strong control over action.

The two dimensions *culture/ideology* or *civil/political* are continuous rather than dichotomous variables.[130] This means that civil and political religions are interrelated poles rather than absolute antinomies. The relationship between them is inherently dialectical, and so is their relation to the political order. That is, civil religion can never be totally separated from political religion. One may speak of "degrees" or shades of civil religion--the distinction being one of emphasis. At certain historical junctures civil religion may be more confined to certain groups within society (more civil); at others, it may be limited to the state (more political). In other words, civil religions may have a strong political component, "even if relatively minor ones," while political religions may have many civic components, "even if largely confined to the background."[131] This distinction rests on the capacity of civil religion to provide a meaning system or "a picture of the universe in terms of which the moral understandings make sense," in either a coercive or a non-coercive manner.[132] It also depends on the degree of control the state has to produce and reproduce the sacred symbols and belief system. What is at issue here, is whether the state "requires an

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[130] I am indebted to Hammond (1980a:42) here. He notes that the "civil" and the "religious" dimensions of civil religion are "continuous variables, not dichotomous."

[131] Bellah has argued that Japanese civil religion, while being very authoritarian in nature has some "egalitarian components, even if relatively minor ones." The American case, while largely democratic has "hierarchical components, even if largely confined to the background" (Bellah, 1980d:30). I have borrowed Bellah's idea to make the distinction between civil and political religions.

[132] Bellah has argued that society's moral understandings about what is 'right' or 'wrong' "must rest...upon a set of religious understandings that provide a picture of the universe in terms of which the moral understandings make sense" (Bellah, 1975:ix).

unusual amount of centrally regulated 'force' to insure compliance," or whether the civic faith is, or seems to be, "sufficiently *internalized*" by a majority of the citizens so that compliance to societal values, beliefs and norms is accomplished in an "enthusiastic and primarily voluntary basis" (Anthony and Robbins, 1975:411).[133] The central focus is the *political referent*. We want to know how patterns of belief and behavior common to the culture are transmitted to citizens and future generations. In other words, what are the requirements placed upon citizens in order to assure loyalty, maintenance and preservation of civic piety and/or civility?

So, the form civil religion might take in a particular society depends, in large part, upon specific historical circumstances and social reality. This means that civil religion may shift its meaning and become more or less political, more or less nationalistic, or more or less oriented towards civil society or the state. Broadly speaking, therefore, all civil religions (even in America where it is said to be totally independent from both church and state) have the potential of being used as a political religion.[134]

On a societal level, civil religion *a la* Rousseau implies a conscious, rational, manipulation of the myths of the nation for instrumental political aims, while civil religion *a la Durkheim* does not require direct enforcement by external agencies of social control. The integration of self and society appears to be more "voluntaristic." The Durkheimian culturalist approach, where undoubtedly Bellah and followers should be placed, emphasizes shared values and cultural elements:

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[133] The authors use this distinction in the context of the value systems of Russia and China. In their view, Russian communism appeared to require an unusual amount of control and "centrally regulated 'force,'" while Maoism seemed to be "sufficiently *internalized*," showing a strong tendency towards voluntary compliance. History has proven that Maoism was no different--it also required a strong regulated force to insure compliance with the communist. Chinese-style tenets of faith.

[134] For a discussion of Richard Nixon's exploitation of civil religion "to rally support for his Vietnam policy, especially during the 1970 rally," see Linder and Pierard (1978). See also Donahue (1975), and Bennett (1979) for an analysis of the "dilemma of public morality" and potential 'abuses' of American civil religion in public life.

"society itself is the object of religious behaviour and the reference for religious symbols in given social order" (Wilson, 1979:159). Civil religion thus conceptualized is more of a "given" rather than the result of a specific political agenda or policy (Demerath and Williams, 1994:113). It may indeed have a political orientation, but, as mentioned above, this would appear in a less coercive (or even non-coercive) form. As a cultural phenomenon, civil religion is assumed to exist "somewhere between . . . religion and government" (Wimberley and Christenson, 1980:36). In democracies, it will be socialization, not mere force or threat, that would facilitate its production in society. However, particular institutional structures or "carriers" are instrumental for the support, maintenance, and reproduction of cultural beliefs and values.

In other words, in the Durkheimian/American model, the processes of civil religion are assumed to generate "collective understandings." These understandings represent the "moral sentiments" of a people and the "spontaneous" affirmation of the social order (in the sense of proceeding from the will or from one's own choice). One may say that individuals are 'born,' so to speak, into the national faith; no particular commitment or act of joining is necessary. No one is legally compelled to follow or support against his/her will the ideals of the civic creed. In fact, those who choose not to accept the tenets of faith are in no special danger. As such, civil religion is institutionalized through education or the legal system, so people will experience "faith," largely in an unconscious or taken-for-granted fashion. That is, the values characteristic of a people become embodied in institutions which help perpetuate them. This would imply that civil religion (if considered at a societal level), is *instilled* in citizens and, to a certain extent, required of them, but it is not forced on them. It could be argued that civil religion in its cultural form is part of what Durkheim calls the 'collective representations' of the society.

Political religions, by contrast, are anchored in specific ideologies. In political religions, as advocated by Rousseau, the role of the state is fundamental. The state is assigned an educative task. It is essential to change the individual through an "Etat educateur" (Willaime, 1994:574). The state and its political officials, in a sense, become the guardian of the most fundamental values and '*needs*' of the society. Values and 'needs,' in turn, are raised to the "status of transcendental beliefs" (Apter, 1963:93). These 'fundamental needs,' may include things as varied as 'ethnic cleansing,' the desire for cultural survival of a particular separatist group, the desire to achieve modernity, development, industrialization or the desire to become a superpower by attaining scientific, technological, military or nuclear superiority (either to end Communist rule, or block American imperialism, as was the case during the cold war, for example). Or, they may address issues of natural rights, right to life, and so on. However, as an ideology of the state or political organizations, civil religion is always the prerogative of the government. Civil religion as 'ideology' is thus *imposed*, with varying degrees of success, from the top down, without "explanation or comment" as Rousseau advocated. In this case, we will have a highly articulated self-conscious symbol system, the result of conscious political determination. As such, civil religion becomes an organizing principle for the specific purpose of mobilizing collective action, "clothed in the universalist language of God's will and transcendent justice" (Williams, 1996:374).

It goes without saying that methods of socialization may be manipulated and even controlled by political authorities. As Weber suggests a particular religious ideology may be proliferated quite successfully "by an alliance between the carrying stratum and political rulers" (in Hughey, 1983:42). In other words, the government may utilize the educational process for inculcating those quasi

'unconscious' feelings. So in its institutionalized form, it too may be subject to a measure of manipulation, but its influence will be exerted in a less compelling form.

In short, civil religions of the type Rousseau advocates are truly *political religions* representing the extreme end of the civil religion spectrum. In the Rousseauan variety a *belief* is imposed upon the people (often in an arbitrary manner), while in the Durkheimian form people experience *faith, civic piety*, or simply *a common religion.* While Durkheim's doctrine yields a civil religion of integration and cooperation, which does not contemplate submissive acceptance to the creed, Rousseau, by contrast, creates a civil religion of constraint that demands unquestionable loyalty and commitment.[135]

Selznick (1992:387) makes a distinction between "civility" and "piety" as two different sources of morality and moral integration in society. He argues that they parallel Durkheim's distinction between organic and mechanical solidarity. The former "generates rules of civility" while the latter is based on "shared history and identity." While Selznick's claim may be true, and civility and morality may be compared *within* Durkheim's theory in terms of advanced and "primitive" societies, it may be more illuminating to contrast civility and piety in terms of a Rousseauan and Durkheimian model of civil religion. One may argue that Rousseau's intention was to foster and enforce "civility," while the central focus of Durkheim is "piety." For piety, as Selznick acknowledges, "expresses devotion" and "demands integration," whereas civility "governs diversity, protects autonomy, and upholds toleration" only if individuals are good citizens. While Rousseau insists that each person may have what religion he pleases, and what opinion he pleases, he also reminds those in charge that "tolerance should be given to all religions that tolerate others, so long

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[135] This is taken from Durkheim's distinction between mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. The former creates a "morality of constraint," the latter yields a "morality of cooperation" (Selznick, 1992:165 fn30).

as their dogmas contain nothing contrary to the duties of citizenship" (Rousseau, 1973:276). Whereas for Durkheim *piety* is spontaneous phenomenon "felt" by the collectivity, for Rousseau *civility* implies indoctrination and conscious construction.

Hence, at one end of the spectrum one can locate civil religion "as culture," with a more social orientation, and at the other civil religion "as ideology" with a more marked political orientation. The continuum ranges from what Willaime has called a "religion civile communitaire" which functions at a local, regional, national, or even international level, and a "religion civile politique" which functions basically "au niveau de l'apparel de'Etat" (Willaime, 1993:573).

One needs hardly to be reminded this is an 'ideal-type' construction. I am not suggesting that any given civil religion is in fact 'cultural' or 'ideological' in any absolute sense. In fact, it is highly unlikely that we will ever find a civil religion in 'pure' form. Either type can turn into the other. In the most literal sense, all civil religions are partially both types or are 'mixed.' It is only for analytical purposes that I have made a sharp distinction between two 'ideal-types.'

The dialectic between civil religion and political religion can be approached as a tension between spontaneous and enforced values, beliefs, and ideas. It goes without saying that this same dialectical tension exists *within* each type of civil religion as well as *between* them. This would suggest that the degree of freedom granted to those who do not subscribe to the tenets of faith is an important element that should be taken into account. In other words, the ratio of externally imposed force to voluntary compliance may be taken as an index of the type of "civil religion" under consideration.[136]

[136] Anthony and Robins (1975) look at the relationship between "voluntary compliance" and "imposed force" as an indicator of the "truth" a of a civil religion.

Some of the often-used evidence to record the degree of freedom "opposition groups" enjoy in non-democratic societies is: "the amount of repressive action against specific groups," "arrests of significant persons for political reasons," "arrests of insignificant persons," "politically motivated killings by the government," and "frequency with which the constitution is suspended and martial law is declared" (Cole and Hammond, 1974:182). So, we may ask, what methods are used to subject people's behaviour to a national belief system? Is consensus inauthentic and manipulative rather than genuine? Or, put it in another form, how is consensus maintained and the solidarity of citizens with the civil religion of a nation encouraged, and among whom? How is a deviant consensus discouraged, by what methods? What happens to "non-believers"? As a "transcendental universal religion of the nation"(to use Bellah's words), is the meaning, solidarity and understanding of the nation's, or group's experience, widely shared by most citizens or group members? What influence does the government have in controlling ways in which basic values and beliefs are mobilized or articulated? Does civil religion exert a cultural or political influence?

It follows that the *political* or *civil* character of civil religion is primarily determined by its particular structural location, either to the side of the state or to the side of society. This depends, in turn, on the nature and structure of the state (or the particular process of state formation in less developed societies), the national religious 'environment' or culture, and the relations between them. It would also appear to be conditioned by the "availability of more or less coherent, alternative ideologies to interpret the national experience" (Markoff and Regan, 1983:342-345).

"Total" state-appropriation of civil religion, and the transformation of a totalitarian ideology and its political rituals in an "official" religion is more likely to appear in societies with a "weak civil society." As Markoff and Regan have argued, the "propagation of an elaborate belief system

rejecting older religious beliefs and institutions is clearly enhanced if the political arrangements include a monistic state uncontrolled by civil society" (1982:347). In such cases, the political process itself becomes a religion which everyone is forced to embrace. The most notable "but not the only twentieth-century examples are either totalitarian regimes or regimes with a recent totalitarian past" (Markoff and Regan, 1983:347). A strong civil society, or to use Durkheim's phraseology, societies with a strong sense of "moral community" are less likely to develop a totalitarian type of political religion. Needless to say, a strong civil society has always presented dictators with a more difficult barrier to trespass (Giner, 1993:43).

The differences between "civil" and "political" religions may be discernible *between* societies, and from one era to another *within* the same society. Markoff and Regan in comparing and contrasting the French and Malaysian civil religions have already pointed in this direction. To Bellah's assertion that "all politically organized societies have some sort of civil religion . . . " (Bellah, 1974:257), Markoff and Regan respond: "Perhaps, but what sort?" (1982:341). Their study suggests several respects in which civil religions differ dramatically. They see "not only differences between national cases, but striking distinct versions of civil religiosity within either instance" (1982:141). As they mention, the possibility always exists of the "coexistence, sometimes uneasy, of multiple civil religions within a nation-state and rival images of the future--each, perhaps, associated with a particular group" (Markoff and Regan, 1982:340). To sum up, one may speak of different social, historical, religious and political determinants or bases of civil religion.

Both civil and political religions tend to "consecrate essentially profane components of social life," especially through civic rituals and public ceremonies (Giner, 1993:55). Both concepts seek to explain "the intrusions of religious codes" into the public political realm (Luke, 1987:109).

Both embody "the terms of reference in which politics will be justified." This may include politics of opposition, for civil religion is not only "a claim for legitimacy: it is a moral yardstick that permits such a claim, or counterclaim" (Markoff and Regan, 1983:342). In other words, civil religion's rhetoric may be used to legitimize both a just and an unjust social order. It may also be used as a justification to "eliminate" opposition or as a means to "facilitate" collective action (Coleman and Hammond, 1974:182).

While both are linked with "politics and reinforce the legitimacy of political ideology," the nature of the religious-political element varies. In civil religion, the '*religious*' element is provided by connecting the political order with a transcendent power, meaning or symbolism, often derived from a traditional religion (the Judeo-Christian tradition, for example, in the case of American civil religion). Whereas in political religion the '*religious*' element is more markedly embedded in the sacralization of a particular political order, program, or agenda (Zuo, 1991:104). This may happen with or without the sponsorship of the church or of a national religion, as in the case of Marxist-Leninism (via U.S.S.R. and China), or in revolutionary France. By the same token, the '*political*' element is less salient in civil religions, and more evident in political religions. In other words, as Lane argues effectively, the link between religion and politics, the connection between "transcendent power and political authority," and the demands placed on citizens in terms of their civic and political duties, is different in political and civil religions (Lane, 1981:45).

It follows that civil religion is neither simply civil nor purely religious, but it is also centrally political.[137] Wilson (1979:172) has even suggested that it "may be helpful" to interpret the civil

[137] The importance of the religious-political link for an understanding of the civil religion phenomenon was recognized by Bellah from the very beginning. In his 1967 article he contended that "these questions are worth pursuing because they raise the issue of how civil religion is related to the political society, on the one hand, and to private religious organizations, on the other" (Bellah, 1967:3). Bellah's focus, however, has been more on the religious dimension of civil

religion phenomenon more properly as a "latent political revitalization movement than as a manifestly religious one."[138] Markoff and Regan have noted that a "minimalist version" of civil religion would be that which is neither too religious nor too political.[139]

It should be clear that civil religion, insofar as it entails the application of religious ideas to political life, always carries some risk of becoming an ideologically closed system. As long as civil religion is consciously manipulated by the state and state officials to sanction the political order, we are in the presence of a political religion. Simply put, at particular historical moments democracies may show "tendencies" towards the development of a political religion, even if in a mild form. Thus, I find myself in disagreement with scholars who claim that political religions belong to Communist regimes and dictatorships found in the Third World, while civil religions are primarily found in modern industrialized societies (Zuo, 1991).[140] I also find myself in disagreement with those who make exactly the opposite claim. That is, that the political religions of totalitarian regimes are not civil religions (Giner, 1993). Giner's central thesis is that under a totalitarian regime

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religion rather than on its political manifestation.

[138] For an excellent discussion of civil religion "as movement ideology," see Williams and Alexander (1994). The authors analyze the rhetoric of late nineteenth-century American Populism, its religious language and symbolism. Populism's basic message and rhetoric was borrowed from American "civil religious" discourse. This allowed Populism to gain a "politically legitimate vocabulary" and platform to challenge the status quo. The authors argue that the ideology of civil religion was as important to mobilization of supporters as other factors such as economic or organizational features. For a discussion of civil religion in America as a "revitalization movement," see Wilson (1979), the Epilogue.

[139] Markoff and Regan note that in France the Post-Thermidor political elites wanted neither the mass mobilization of the Revolution's first half-decade, nor a government armed with the "vast emergency powers of the great Committee," nor certainly "any form of royalist, clerical, or aristocratic coalition" which might reverse the Revolution. Both the extreme Catholic and anti-Catholic versions of civil religion were much too threatening, and hence a *minimalist* version emerged (Markoff and Regan, 1983:346).

[140] This distinction is misleading. One may also find civil religions in the West which in their content, form and substance are truly political religions of a mild variety. See, for example, Ungar's article "Civil religion and the arms race" (1991), also Linder and Pierard (1978).

both civil religion and civil society cease to exist. In his view, civil religions are located in civil society not in political society (the state). It is worth pointing out that it was Rousseau, after all, who coined the term *civil religion*, and undoubtedly he placed its locus in the realm of the state not of civil society.

Rousseau clearly spelled out his ideas on civil religion and "was prepared to follow through on the totalitarian implications of that claim" (Rouner, 1986:99). What is astonishing is the lack of rigorous attention to the conceptual meaning of Rousseau's theory. As we have seen, Bellah and his followers have been unable, or perhaps unwilling, to clarify the distinction between the Durkheimian and Rousseauan approaches. To put it in another form, scholars have not only failed to understand the tremendous political resonance of Rousseau's doctrine, but they have also failed to address the issue of whether civil religion is distinguishable, and why, from political religion. Granted, this is a distinction that is difficult to make, and for some scholars it is even difficult to accept.[141]

Once all is said and done, and the distinction between civil religion as culture and civil religion as ideology is clearly made, it seems reasonable to assume that both the Durkheimian and Rousseauan approaches to civil religion remain instructive. Following Durkheim, one may say that any collectivity develops its own sense of identity, 'sacredness,' destiny, and mission. This means that every group, community, or nation is likely to develop a system of beliefs by which it comes to 'sacralize' its self-understanding. This sacralization engenders a sort of 'collective piety' which is experienced by most (in Durkheim's view probably by all) members of the group (Willaime,

[141] Some authors prefer to use the term *political theology*. See, for example, Carl Schmitt (1970) and Moltmann, (1986). Wilson (1986) considers it "an error" to confuse civil religion with political theology or political religion.

1993:572). This means that every stable, functioning society/group has to an important degree a "common religion" (Williams, 1951:312).

In other words, if one accepts Durkheim's thesis, no functioning society or group can exist without a common religion or, at least, without a religious dimension. Likewise, most collectivities will tend to produce some sort of *moral community*. It follows that "a religious expression of [the] collectivity as a social reality must exist" (Wilson, 1979:154). This would imply that if a society (or collectivity) "wants to survive as a viable social system" it must possess a set of shared values, beliefs and aspirations (Demerath and Hammond, 1969:204). Durkheim assures us that if the traditions and aspirations of a group are extinguished, if "social representations" are destroyed, the collectivity would dissolve and society would die. That is, it would stop functioning as a 'viable' social system (Mitchell, 1990:115). Perhaps this is what Sidney Verba had in mind when he referred to the "primordial attachment that is necessary for the long-term maintenance of a political system" (in Wilson, 1979:69).

This Durkheimian notion is considered to be a sort of 'taken-for-granted' assumption among "functional social theorists (if not all social theorists)" (Demerath and Hammond, 1969:204). Coleman writes: "Durkheim's contention that every group has a religious dimension seems to hold for some authors a permanent validity" (1969:69). Indeed, Bellah recognizes that his argument was "premised on the sociological idea that all politically organized societies have some sort of civil religion" (Bellah, 1974:257). On the basis of this Durkheimian assumption, a civil religion is not only an unavoidable phenomenon, but it is also absolutely "critical to the life" of any society or collectivity (Wilson, 1979:154). Needless to say, Durkheim's thesis has been phrased and rephrased in countless different ways.

Despite some obvious disagreements, it is a fact that "short of brute force, peoples need to trust each other and trust implies a common acceptance of the higher aims toward which activity is directed" (Demerath and Hammond, 1969:204). In other words, for "cultural processes of solidarity" and identity to take shape and form, it is essential to maintain a sense of *moral community* or some kind of "common moral" beliefs (Bellah, 1975:). Obviously shared understandings or meanings do not have to be based upon religious understanding (Anthony and Robins, 1975:407). Neither do they have to be perceived as embracing necessarily the nation as a whole. Some groups may be excluded because they have not been invited, or may exclude themselves by refusing to attend the 'Republican Banquet.'

At the same time, however, in order to reinforce Durkheim's "moral community," or collective identity, a coherent and intellectually elaborated idea-system is needed--which is exactly what Rousseau proposed.[142] As Williams (1996:372) rightly notes, "any collective political action requires both cultural processes of solidarity as well as ideological justifications"(Williams and Demerath, 1991:426). Perhaps Gramsci was right when he reflected that "political control requires both consent and coercion" (in Williams, 1996:372). The preceding analysis suggests that whereas the Durkheimian variety tends to move in the direction of consent, Rouseau's starting line is, undoubtedly, coercion.

But Durkheim's idea of a "moral community" is not without its problems. It is certainly controversial and "equivocal" in its American usage. By definition, a "moral community" is not, or need not be equated with the whole national experience or with the society as a whole, as Bellah and

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[142] Bear in mind that for Durkheim the moral reaffirmation of a society is achieved through rituals, ceremonies and collective celebrations where individuals "reaffirm in common their common sentiments" (1961:475). He emphasizes practices rather than beliefs.

most American sociologists interested on this subject would often seem to imply. It seems highly unlikely that, in America or anywhere else in the world, we "will ever find evidence" for a total commonality of values and beliefs, or as Wilson notes "for a monovalent and highly coherent national meaning system." What we might find is a series of what Wilson has called "frameworks of intelligibility," espoused by a diversity of groups for a diversity of purposes (1979:94). This implies that different groups may belong to different "moral communities" not to a single overarching one. Different groups, in turn, may produce different civil religions.

There is an even greater problem. As Liebman and Don-Yehiha have pointed out, some scholars have argued "normatively," that moral communities spell danger. That is, "allegiance or loyalty to a nation-state is evil because moral communities are dangerous." There is always the fear that the conception of a moral community may lead "inevitably" to authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, as the cases of Spain, Germany, Chile, Communist China, or the Soviet Union, among others, clearly testify. Indeed, as Liebman and Don-Yehiha indicate, "most, or perhaps all, totalitarian states view themselves as moral communities entitled to suppress individual freedoms in the name of collective purposes" (1983:215). The idea of moral community may also lead to narrowness, chauvinism, and exclusiveness, creating a gulf between "us" and "them"(whether the 'us' and 'them' is expressed in national, religious, social, ethnic, or political terms). A national "moral community" which identifies individuals primarily as citizens of a particular nation (or state) may also give rise to a dangerous nationalist mentality, as suggested in Chapter Six. It may provide a fertile soil for nationalist ideologies, which may be expressed in either a benign or destructive form.

To sum up, one of the major weakness of the civil religion thesis is its exclusive reliance on the Durkheimian tradition. From this rather simple fact stems most of the problems one finds in the literature. We have seen that a conceptual clarification of Rousseau's and Durkheim's theories lead to two quite different conceptions of civil religion--each perspective resting upon a distinctive set of premises. Durkheim's emphasis on shared group values and on the understanding that comes from collective participation, is very different from Rousseau's advocacy of a civil religion as the bond of political community. Throughout the thesis, and whenever pertinent, I have explored these two traditions in more detail in an attempt to show how often very different issues underlie each one.

Furthermore, I have identified a number of problems, and raised, along the way, several major objections against the civil religion thesis, particularly in the context of American society. The most worthwhile noticing are here briefly mentioned again. Perhaps the most important one is that civil religion is not "*by definition*" an integrative force in society. In modern, pluralist society, where the idea of the individual is dominant, it is difficult to find an overall binding belief system. Even if we assume that the post-industrial liberal individual still requires a symbol system, which would provide him/her with ultimate meaning, it does not follow that a single civil religion will automatically accomplish this task. Religious pluralism, different world views held by different individuals, and social and ethnic heterogeneity, makes this possibility very unlikely. True, civil religion may provide a binding cement for a large number of people, groups, or sectors of the population. In this sense, it may serve to "sanctify different subgroups within the larger society" (Liebman and Don-Yehiva, 1983:12). As Wilson notes, that certain symbols, ceremonies, or national rituals may assume a religious character for certain groups or individuals, is, perhaps, an "incontrovertible" proposition (1971:20). In the specific context of American society, the values

Bellah mentions have, no doubt, "been prominent throughout American history, and remain so." This is also an unquestionable proposition (Hughey, 1983:68). Obviously, those values have not always represented *all* Americans. Most importantly, values and symbols do not "lead relatively autonomous existence" they are immersed in the sphere of every day conflicts and struggles. They are "important means" through which specific social groups express their own ideals and interests (Hughey, 1983:172). The values of the American creed have clearly expressed white, Anglo-Saxon values. That is, the values of the dominant group in America. This means that either as a 'dominant culture' or as a 'dominant ideology,' civil religion does not successfully incorporate all social groups and segments of society.[143] By arguing that civil religion exists "out there" expressing the experiences and aspirations of all Americans, proponents of the Durkheimian tradition have effectively "detached" civil religion from specific groups or "carriers" (Hughey, 1983:68). Moreover, as indicated especially in Chapters Four and Five, civil religion may, at times, be quite *disintegrative* leading to moral confusion and conflict rather than integration. In other words, the analysis presented in this thesis contradicts Bellah's notion of a well-established American civil religion which expresses the religious-self-definition of the American people as a whole. It also calls into question the 'total' moral unity that civil religion allegedly produces. Consequently, civil religion cannot and does not *mobilize* the entire nation on behalf of socially approved tasks and responsibilities. I have also argued that in the civil religion phenomenon one can find the coalescence

[143] See the argument advanced by Abercrombie et al. in their book *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (1980). The authors contest the view that a 'dominant ideology' successfully incorporates powerless groups into an existing social system, thereby perpetuating their subordination. They argue that there is a strong parallel between functionalist approaches to culture and Marxist accounts of dominant ideology. Neither a 'dominant ideology' nor a 'dominant culture' incorporate all social groups. The only important role they assign to the dominant ideology is that of binding the dominant class itself. As they note, "ideology has importance in explaining the coherence of the dominant class but not in the explanation of the coherence of a society as a whole" (1980:3).

of both spontaneous cultural elements and ideological coercive ones. Finally, contrary to arguments found in the literature, the alleged structural differentiation of American civil religion has been called into question. As Bellah himself has recognized, there is a necessity, built into the American republican tradition, "not only for the assertion of high ethical and spiritual commitments, but also for moulding, socializing, educating the citizens in those ethical and spiritual beliefs so that they are internalized as republican virtue" (Bellah, 1978:21). This suggests (and I believe I have given enough evidence to prove it) that civil religion has an institutional basis or a set of "carriers" which provide organized and ritualized reinforcement of values and ethical standards (the courts, educational system, media, political system, etc.). If this proposition is accepted, then, civil religion can never be totally "differentiated." That is, it can never constitute a symbol system separated from political institutions. While agreeing that civil religion in the U.S. represents, perhaps, a unique case, I have argued that it is not a *fully differentiated* belief system.

In short, the civil religion notion, in its present formulation, has proven to be somehow inadequate on several grounds: a) it does not provide an adequate solution to the problem of "conflict" in society, whether this conflict is expressed in terms of, race, class, or political ideology; b) it is often not useful to evaluate significant differences or "shades" of civil religions both between societies and within them; c) it is inadequate to explore the possibility that civil religious beliefs are ideologies produced by some groups; d) it is inadequate, again, to analyse politically motivated uses of civil religion.

The critique presented in this study, however, does not necessarily mean that the civil religion concept is sociologically useless. On the contrary, I remain convinced that the notion of civil religion addresses an important sociological topic of investigation--the "religio-political

problem" (Bellah. 1980a:vii). Bellah has rightly observed this problem "will not go away, whether we use the term 'civil religion' in thinking about it or not" (1989:147). Civil religion either as a cultural phenomenon (i.e., a group understanding of itself) or as a political phenomenon (i.e., a matter relating to the government or the state). seems inevitable in any collectivity. By suggesting that the American civil religion model is inadequate, I have, by no means, implied that it is also false. While I have raised numerous criticisms, my intention has been to identify the limitations, and, particularly, the one-sidedness of the Durkheimian/Bellah tradition, not its falsity. I have provided an alternative model for the study of civil religion which, I hope, will make it easier to understand and identify different varieties of civil religion. For, each culture, each society, and perhaps each civil group, however diverse they may be, will give different answers to the problem of meaning, to the problem of identity, and to the politico-religious problem, and thus they will likely produce different civil religions.

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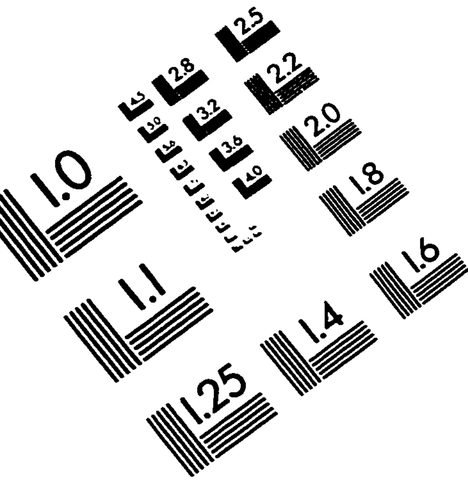
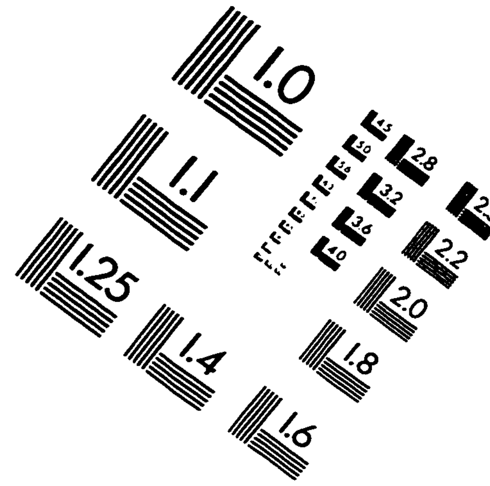
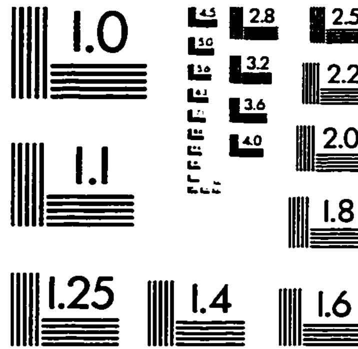

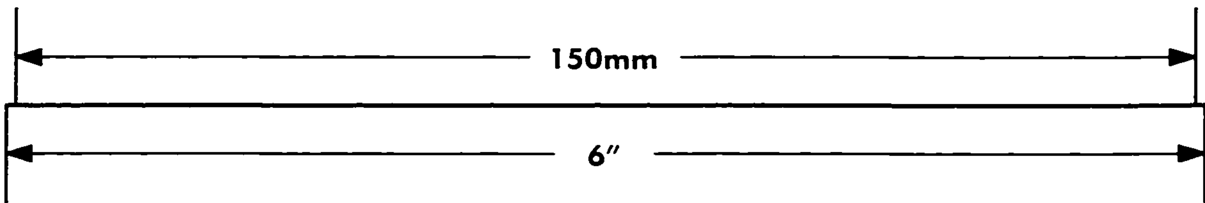

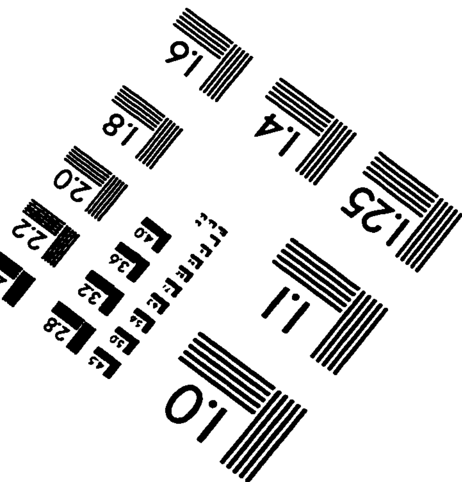
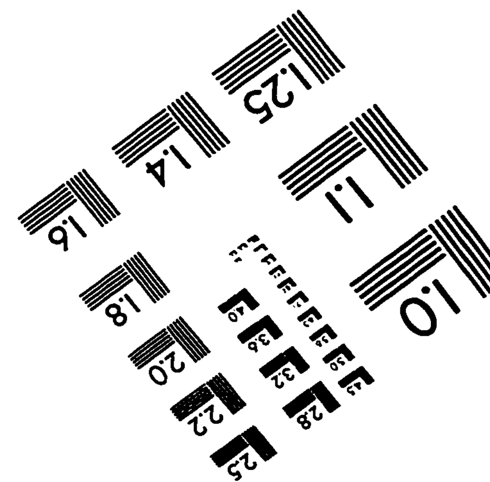

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