

**RELIGION AND SECULARISM:
TOWARDS A RECONCILIATION**

XAVIER SCOTT

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**GRADUATE PROGRAM IN PHILOSOPHY
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO**

December 2017

© Xavier Scott, 2017

Abstract

This dissertation examines the evolving relationship between religion and the state in political philosophy. I begin with an examination of what religion is. I argue that religion is not primarily a belief system about metaphysics but rather a social system, which is better understood in terms of politics than science. In the second chapter, I look at the origins of secular political philosophy in early-modern Europe and contrast it with medieval political theory. I note that this transition does not mark a separation of church and state, but in fact accomplishes the expropriation of religious functions by the state. Therefore, I argue that the modern, secular state should not be mistaken for a neutral arbiter between competing religious perspectives. The modern state is itself a very interested party in how religion is expressed, understood, and in which religions are supported by the state. In my third chapter, I look at the rise of secular ideologies in the context of what Charles Taylor calls ‘the modern moral order’. I note that secular ideologies have attempted to reform society on the basis of ideals that avoid taking a stand on questions of religion. I question whether societies are capable of functioning on the basis of principle alone and note the tendency of liberal and communist states to adopt different forms of nationalism. I show that where universalist ideologies were once on the rise and spreading across the globe, they are increasingly met with the particularisms of culture and religion. Finally, I return to the topic of religion in contemporary political life. I examine four features of religion that have come under attack. Each of these problematic features of religion, I argue, also perform salutary functions in society. I show that this is particularly the case in societies where secular institutions are failing to provide institutional support or a sense of belonging to their members. By recognizing the complexity of religion’s interaction with the secular state, we can develop more nuanced approaches that are able to avoid the extremes of xenophobia and cultural relativism.

Dedication

To the peoples of Somaliland and Egypt, who taught me about religion and secularism. And to Mustafa and his family, for inviting me to break the Ramadan fast with them.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many people who made this dissertation possible. First, the encouragement and guidance that I received from my committee were incredible and went beyond what is typically expected of a dissertation committee. My supervisor, Dr. Michael Giudice, has been a long-time mentor and has helped me develop as an academic, a teacher, and a writer. Dr. Jim Vernon's probing comments constantly challenged me to further develop my views and greatly contributed to the analytic clarity in my work. Dr. Kristin Andrews's faith in me and writing advice were invaluable and – with no exaggeration – I would not be defending right now without her support and guidance.

I would also like to thank the community at York University and the faculty and staff of the Philosophy department in particular for providing me a home to conduct my research in. Dr. Esteve Morera, who supervised an earlier version of this dissertation, inspired much of the direction this project took and pushed me to improve the clarity and quality of my writing. Dr. Alice MacLachlan gave frequent mentorship and career advice and was a kind and supportive presence in the department. Emma Posca's diligence and enthusiasm were an enormous help in coordinating the many bureaucratic hurdles involved in the final stages of writing. I would also like to thank my M.A. supervisors, Dr. Avron Kulak and Dr. Brayton Polka – for helping me to reconsider the value of religion and its impact on European philosophy. A course I audited with Dr. Mark Cauchi was similarly instructive. Dr. Radhika Mongia's course on post-colonial theory helped me to challenge some of the preconceptions of the European philosophical tradition.

I also benefitted greatly from my fellow graduate students. Time talking with Fayaz Chagani, Colin Leonard-White, Jamie Smith, Sam Steadman, Andrew Parker, Andrew Molas, Sas Ansari, and too many others to name provided me with friendship as well as the intellectual climate I needed to develop my ideas. Long-time friendships with Nathaniel Laywine, Robyn Caplan, Luke Woodyard, Halley Rigbey, Ben Sainsbury, Jaime Nikolaou, Gustavo Cerquera, Peter Chonka, Josephine Heger, and Nakjung Kim have provided me with much comradeship, joy, and stimulating discussion. Erica Glossop deserves special mention for encouraging me to push forward when I began to worry that I would never finish. I would also like to thank the friendly staff at Field Trip Café, at 3 Westmoreland Avenue, who provided me the space and coffee I needed to work. I cannot forget my dog Howie, whose big heart and tiny brain helped to tear me away from the intellectual rigors of academia and appreciate walks in the park. I would also like to thank the many people I have met in my travels over the years who have helped me to appreciate the many ways religion and secularism are practiced in different contexts. The people I met in Somaliland, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Ethiopia, South Korea, and Cuba have contributed to as much to this project as anything that I have read.

I would not be writing this dissertation without the love and support of my family. My mom, Gyllian Raby, gave me my love of reading, my passion for social justice, and helped me to edit and improve my writing on this and many other projects. My dad, Nigel Scott, taught me about the world and raised me on news and critical thinking, as well as an appreciation for jokes. My sister, Nelly "Zuma" Scott, has a love of life and spirituality that is an inspiration to all around her. Finally, and most importantly, I need to thank my love, partner, roommate, dog mom, and best friend – Audrey Madsen. Words cannot express how much love and support she's given. Our happy family is unlike any other and I feel truly blessed to be a member of it.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
I. Introduction	1
1. Background and Aims	1
2. Topic Overview	4
3. Defining Religion and Secularism	8
4. Thesis	14
5. Methodology & Contribution to the Literature	16
6. Chapter Descriptions	21
II. Religion: Beyond Metaphysics	24
1. Religion as a Metaphysical View of the Universe; Religion and Science	25
1.1 Religion – an evolutionary mistake?	29
1.2 Alternate approaches to religion’s metaphysics: pantheism and NOMA.	38
2. Religion as a Moral Community; Definition from Social Science	46
3. Religion as a Private Psychological Experience; Definition from Psychology	51
4. Religion as a Means of Supporting the Common Good; Religion in Political Philosophy ..	54
5. Religion as a Form of Ethnic Nationalism	59
6. Human Kinds and Problems with Definitions	63
7. A Social and Political Approach to Religion	68
8. Conclusion	70
III. From Souls to Citizens: Social Imaginaries and the Organization of Violence	72
1. Notes on Methodology	73
2. The City of God and the City of Man	79
3. Love, Fear, and the Centralization of the State	84
4. Scriptural Analogues to Sovereignty Doctrine	92
5. Sovereignty and International Law	99
6. The Westphalian Consensus and the Modern State	107
7. Conclusion	109

IV. Secular Ideologies.....	113
1. The Modern Moral Order.....	115
2. Secular Ideologies.....	122
2.1 Liberalism.	125
2.2 Communism.....	140
2.3 Nationalism.....	151
3. Colonial States, Religious Threats.....	158
4. Conclusion: ‘The Private Is Political’	163
V. Political Features of Religion.....	165
1. Religiously Imagined Communities	166
1.1 Religions divide loyalties; civilizations unite them.	167
1.2 Thick and thin communities.....	171
2. The Institutional Structures of Religion.....	179
2.1 The Catholic Church as paradigmatic corrupt institution.	179
2.2 Salutory features of religious institutions.	184
3. Religious Traditions.....	190
4. Religion’s connection to Emotional Enthusiasm.....	197
4.1 The Trouble with religious enthusiasts.	199
4.2 The Danish cartoon debate and the ‘South Park’ controversy.....	203
5. Conclusion	207
VI. Conclusion	209
1. Community	210
2. Translation	213
3. Balance.....	216
References.....	222

I. Introduction

1. Background and Aims

I grew up a devout atheist and leftist, who was always made uncomfortable by religion. As a teenager I'd often mock the ridiculous metaphysical claims that I believed were at the heart of my classmates' Christian beliefs. After the September 11th attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Centre I found that the criticism of religion as an irrational form of belief became more popular and entered the mainstream in North America. As a critic of American imperialism, I was unsettled by the sudden proliferation of anti-religious arguments that were being used to justify the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Military intervention and secular state building were increasingly cast as solutions to the problems of unchecked religiosity. Books by the 'New Atheists' such as *The End of Faith* (Harris 2005), *The God Delusion* (Dawkins 2006), and *God is not Great* (Hitchens 2009) became international best-sellers by advocating extreme anti-religious perspectives. I became troubled by these arguments, which I'd once admired for exposing the 'illogicality of Christianity', as their popularity seemed caught up in the anti-Muslim (and pro-invasion) sentiments that gripped the 'West' after the September 11th attacks. I began to question my commitment to atheism, which I saw increasingly not as a metaphysical system of belief, but as an anti-religious political project.¹

It wasn't until I read Spinoza during my M.A. that I discovered the legacy of Judeo-Christian thought on contemporary philosophical notions related to justice and politics.

¹ Despite its drawbacks, I will frequently rely on civilizational terms like the 'West' and 'Western' as well as terms like 'Islamic'. These terms pose problems to the accurate study of the phenomena they represent because they imply unity and common vision where internal diversity and disagreement are in fact more common. Nevertheless, the belief that such divisions are real drives much of the debates that cast religion and secularism as opposed to one another.

Spinoza's work is often interpreted as rejecting the truth of religion, yet I appreciated his materialist explanation for religion, that premised its value on its social importance rather than its metaphysical validity. My Major Research Paper compared Machiavelli and Spinoza's treatments of religion, exploring the enormous political importance that each assigned to it. Meanwhile, current events demonstrated that religion was increasingly the dominant social system that opposed the state.

In 2010, I spent a year teaching at the University of Hargeisa in Somaliland. An unrecognized state with a highly religious population, Somaliland's tense relationship with both secular systems of international law and neighboring religious states provided the perfect place to think about the relationship between the secular and the religious. A few months into my contract in Somaliland, 'Arab Spring' began. One event stands out as formative in my own political attitude towards Islam. My students strongly favored a no-fly zone over Libya. Gaddafi had provided arms to Siad Barre in Somalia's civil war and Somalilanders loathed him for this. However, as soon as the no-fly zone was instituted, the students were outraged. They asked me, 'Why do Christians in America like bombing Muslims so much?' I was shocked at their reversal of attitude on the no-fly zone and challenged them with the view they'd espoused just one day earlier. It came out that regardless of their opposition to Gaddafi's killing of his own people, the images of Western jets flying sorties against Gaddafi's forces alienated them more. Gaddafi might be an enemy, as far as Somalilander nationalism was concerned, but the Muslim community had to stand together against such acts of aggression. This was just another Gulf War, they said: a war touting the secular ideology of "human rights" that was really being fought for imperialist control of the Islamic world.

I was studying Arabic in Egypt in 2013 and shortly after my arrival, political protests against the Muslim Brotherhood began. It was touted by many as the largest global protest in history, with Reuters citing military estimates that 14 million people took part in the demonstrations. The streets were packed so tightly that many climbed telephone poles to escape the crowds. When the news was announced that President Morsi was ‘stepping down’ from power the crowd erupted into cries of joy. This remains by far the most impressive instance of mass political action achieving tangible results that I have ever witnessed. Yet my astonishment at the capability of people to work together to achieve political change was short lived. The Egyptian military, who had arrested Morsi, flew attack helicopters low over the city as people cheered. The subsequent arrest of hundreds of members of the democratically elected Muslim Brotherhood on charges of treason, and the imposition of a military dictatorship quickly demonstrated that something was wrong with the new, secular status quo.

The political relationship between the religious and the secular in the modern world is much more complicated than I once believed. I attribute my naiveté in understanding religion’s political role to the metaphysical approach I initially accepted as appropriate to religion. Focusing on the social and political role that religion plays in peoples’ lives is going to be necessary if we want to understand the importance of religion in contemporary politics. Furthermore, the relationship between what has come to be called ‘religion’ with what has come to be called ‘secularism’ complicates the study of religion. How one defines religion and how one differentiates it from non-religious, or secular, phenomena becomes crucial to any proper study of religion in contemporary global-society. Accordingly, the central aim of my dissertation is to reconsider the nature of religion, the nature of secularism, and to determine how their relationship evolved to create these sorts of political problems.

2. Topic Overview

Religion and secularism are key concepts in contemporary politics and the seeming antagonism between them is believed to drive many of the most violent and protracted conflicts in the world today. Tony Blair, one of the major instigators of the Iraq War, famously stated that radical Islam “is the greatest threat facing the world today” (BBC 2010). This was a belief that he developed, following the attacks of September 11th, 2001, which he believed had changed the “calculus of risk” that state actors needed to employ in addressing issues of global security. He referenced the extreme nature of the beliefs driving radical Islamists – focusing in particular on their willingness to use nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons. He took particular issue with Iran and the threat of radical Muslims developing nuclear weapons. Indeed, fear of theological authority for promoting irrational and even dangerous beliefs, is the hallmark of Western foreign policy towards Islamic fundamentalism in the world today. Tony Blair maintained in his biography that if Iran were “a well governed, democratic nation at ease with the world” that his attitude towards their nuclear ambitions would be very different (Blair 2010, 385). There is a widespread Western conviction that if those peoples would hurry up and modernize, the passionate discord of religious difference would disappear. Force might be necessary to accomplish this, which is why Tony Blair supported the military coup in Egypt that removed the democratically elected Muslim Brotherhood from power and placed General al-Sisi in power.

In response, the Taliban released a statement that noted that in fact no Muslim nations have ever used nuclear weapons, whereas the United States had dropped two nuclear weapons on Japan and had used depleted uranium weapons in Iraq and Afghanistan. Furthermore, they argued that this was part of a continued series of aggressive colonial policies, which attempted to take lands away from Muslims by introducing the “European notion of separation of politics and

religion” and “abolished Islamic laws and replaced them with man-made laws” (MEMRI 2010). The history of the Crusades and colonialism stand out in the minds of many Muslims as emblematic of the West’s use of violence to enforce secular laws in place of religious ones. The Taliban also directed their criticism towards state actors in the Middle East who collaborated with Western powers: “The colonialists were aided in their plans by some hypocrites and heretics who, being enticed by worldly gains, actively supported the European powers in their designs against Islam” (MEMRI 2010). When Tony Blair was asked about the theory that his policies had fueled radicalism and whether terrorist groups attacking British and American troops in the Middle East could be said to be simply defending their lands from foreign occupation – he maintained that he stood by his decisions and placed all the blame for violence on radical Islamists, whom he described as “regressive, wicked, and backward-looking” (BBC 2010).

These views are emblematic of what we take to be the incompatibility between secular values and religious values and proponents of these views on either side take force to be the only means of resolving disputes between them. Tony Blair’s statements see the religious views of Islamists as fundamentally dangerous to the global order and as being outdated. The belief that politicized religious views are a thing of the past – even as they continue to develop new, novel forms in the present – remains a core part of support for secularism. In contrast, the Taliban see the West’s secular laws and the desire for ‘worldly gains’ as motivating colonization and the imposition of European norms. Religious worries about secularism frequently focus on the worldliness of morality and law that lacks divine sanction – but also frequently note a desire to remain free from the imposition of cultural norms that are not their own.

In addition to international political disputes being framed in terms that pit secular and religious values against one another, debates over where to place the proper legal boundary on

public religious expression are common features of many states' domestic politics. In May of 2013, Bernard Drainville of the Parti Quebecois proposed a new Charter of Values that would place restrictions on religious wear by public employees and reaffirm Quebec's commitment to equality between men and women. The proposal galvanized supporters of both sides and became one of the most hotly debated issues in Quebec, as well as the rest of the country. Both sides agreed that increased clarity from the province over religious accommodation was necessary, but disagreed over where the line between public and private religious practice ought to be drawn. Detractors argued that this was an unjustifiable assault on the religious freedoms of Quebecers (particularly veiled Muslim women), while proponents argued that if the state was meant to be religiously neutral then its representatives must also behave in a neutral manner. An important assumption in this position is that religion can be meaningfully separated from the secular and that the state is more neutral when this happens. Complicating the debate over banning public religious expression, were the exemptions for historic symbols (such as the crucifix hanging above the Speaker's chair in the Quebec legislature) and the ability of medical professionals to refuse abortion services that conflicted with their personal convictions (whether religiously motivated or not).²

Meanwhile, in February of 2014, both the houses of Arizona's state legislature passed Senate Bill 1062, which stated that "Free exercise of religion is a fundamental right that applies

² The first clause in the Charter simultaneously maintains the need for religious neutrality, while exempting religious expression that is part of Quebec's heritage: "1. In the pursuit of its mission, a public body must remain neutral in religious matters and reflect the secular nature of the State, while making allowance, if applicable, for the emblematic and toponymic elements of Québec's cultural heritage that testify to its history" (Drainville 2013). Neutrality in the exercise of public duties also contained a curious exception: "12. The duties of neutrality and reserve cannot override rules of conduct provided by law that allow physicians and pharmacists to refrain from recommending or providing professional services because of their personal convictions" (Drainville 2013). This provision would allow the religious convictions of public employees to justify denying women health services that MP Niki Ashton called "a fundamental question of equality and human rights" (O'Malley 2014).

in this state even if laws, rules or other government actions are facially neutral” (State of Arizona 2014). The motivation behind it was that it would have given legal protection to people who refused on religious grounds to offer public services to homosexual couples. Republican state Senator Steve Yarbrough said that his bill “is not about allowing discrimination,” but rather, “about preventing discrimination against people who are clearly living out their faith” (Al Jazeera America 2014). After an outpouring of criticism – coming from some of Arizona's largest corporate employers, fellow Republicans, including John McCain, and the public – the governor of Arizona, Jan Brewer, vetoed the bill. She stated that she worried the bill would have 'unintended and negative consequences', particularly for the state's business sector. Proponents of the bill derided the veto as an assault on religious freedom. “Today's veto enables the foes of faith to more easily suppress the freedom of the people of Arizona,” said Doug Napier, a Lawyer for the Alliance Defending Freedom, a conservative Christian non-profit.

These stories illustrate the contested nature of religion in the public sphere. The relationship between religion and law has been a particular site of contestation, as well as the state's official adoption (or banning) of religious tenets and symbols. Some seek to use the state to protect their religious views (like Arizona), while others seek to use the state to keep religion out of the public sphere altogether (as in Quebec). The second thing that is striking about the Quebec and Arizona laws is the way in which both of these cases see a given set of values, secular and religious respectively, as being threatened by the mere presence of those who do not hold them. In Quebec, supporters of Bill 60 worry that the increased adoption of religious symbols will lead to increasing religiosity in the public sphere – to the detriment of equality between men and women. Jan Arbour, who herself opposed Bill 60, was nevertheless sympathetic towards feminists who supported it:

This is where feminists are divided, and understandably so. Pursuing the same objectives, we differ on the acceptable means to advance the true equality of women. It is clear that Bill 60 targets, or in any event will affect, principally Muslim women who wear a head scarf. For many of us who grew up in Quebec, religion, or I should say religions, relegate women to a status of inferiority and submission; and in light of our own history we are suspicious of religious women who believe they accept that status of their own free will. And we are understandably unwilling to let our hard fought gains erode.

In Arizona, supporters of the proposed bill worry that changes in federal legislation regarding same-sex marriage will lead to more public displays of homosexuality. In both cases there was a connection between private belief, public expression, and the law. The private beliefs of individuals, long held sacrosanct in the liberal tradition, troubled the proponents of these laws because if (ir)religious views continue to spread, their proponents might eventually use the democratic process to force them onto society. The relationship between religious belief and the state throws light on the contested relationship between communal and individual rights – particularly the way these are understood in increasingly pluralistic societies and in an increasingly globalized world.

My dissertation aims to answer the following three questions. What is it about religion that has allowed it to persist, and even flourish, when science, globalization, and economic pragmatism have grown to such an extent as to characterize this as a ‘secular age’? What is it about religion that has made it the target of legal restrictions at home and military campaigns abroad – replacing Marxism as the ‘greatest threat’ in the minds of liberal state planners? Finally, how can secular political leftists engage with religion in a productive manner that neither falls into ‘cultural relativism’ nor a xenophobic criticism of ‘backwards societies’?

3. Defining Religion and Secularism

As I noted above, one of the greatest difficulties in any study of religion and secularism is defining the basic terms themselves. When the terms are used in public discourse their meaning

is assumed as obvious by those employing them but the uncritical use of such terms often leaves out phenomena that are, functionally, very similar. Thus, the Charter of Secular values seeks to prevent public displays of religiosity (with turbans, hijabs, and large crucifixes set out as particular examples) – but then allows the crucifix to hang above the Speaker’s chair in the legislature and public employees to refuse to provide abortion services because these are no longer expressions of religion but instead are historical symbols of Quebec culture or matters of private conviction. Moreover, when religious activists in Arizona attempted to pass a law that allowed homophobic discrimination, it was pointed out to them that such a law could potentially be used to justify other forms of discrimination (including racial and religious discrimination) – and further that it might provide justification to anyone who desired to flout the law on the basis that a particular law violated their ‘religious’ freedom.

Theorists in disciplines such as anthropology and sociology have long questioned whether there can be a universal, that is to say – transcultural and transhistorical – definition of religion. William James notes that: “the very fact that [the definitions of religion] are so many and so different from one another is enough to prove that the word ‘religion’ cannot stand for any principle or essence but is rather a collective name” (James 2004, 21). Some theorists of religion, such as Timothy Fitzgerald, have argued that we should abandon the term “religion” because it provides so little analytical clarity, since it has been “used to refer to such diverse institutions as totems, the principle of hierarchy, Christmas cakes, witchcraft, Unconditioned Reality, the Rights of Man, the National Essence, Marxism and Freudianism, the Tea Ceremony, Nature, Ethics, and so on” (1997, 92-3). William Cavanaugh argues in *The Myth of Religious Violence* that the current popular use of the term religion and its separation from secularism serves an ideological function, meant to cast those practices called religious: “as inherently

nonrational and potentially violent, and thus to be privatized, in order to clear the way for the more ‘rational’ and peace-making pursuits of the state and the market” (Cavanagh 2009, 10). Scholars such as Timothy Fitzgerald (1997), Talal Asad (2003), and Saba Mahmood (2016) similarly maintain that the use of terms such as ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ serve ideological functions and ought therefore to be used with caution (in the case of Asad and Mahmood) or abandoned altogether (according to Fitzgerald).

Nevertheless, I am attempting to reconcile the way we approach the relationship between secularism and religion and therefore need to distinguish between the two terms and provide an operative, even if not universally shared, definition of what they mean. In a critique of Fitzgerald, Kevin Schilbrack notes that, while we might not be able to separate religion from other areas of social life (such as culture or politics), we might be able to distinguish it from such areas (Schilbrack 2012). To separate something into different social categories is to make something fit into one category and not another. Social constructions such as ‘The United States’ and ‘Canada’ – neither of which are natural phenomena and both of which rely on arbitrary, socially constructed boundaries – are separable social entities. They are distinct from one another and the boundary between them is clearly identifiable. However, I might conceptually distinguish between my relationship with another person by calling them either ‘my roommate’ or ‘my friend’ (or sister, member of my family, comrade in the revolution, etc.). With each of these terms I foreground a particular feature of my relationship to them without *separating* what I am referring to into distinct entities. In my examination of secularism and religion, there will be numerous instances in which a practice or belief falls into both categories. I hope to show that while we might be able to distinguish between secularism and religion, we need not think of these as phenomena without any overlap between them.

I will spend the second chapter, Religion: Beyond Metaphysics, examining six different definitions of religion and highlight how each of them captures something important about the social category of religion, but I'll lay out a tentative definition here to give the reader some idea of the direction in which I want to take them. *Religion is a set of beliefs, practices, institutions, and identities that unite its adherents into a community related to the divine.* This definition combines features of Émile Durkheim's and William James's definitions of religion, which I'll discuss in greater detail in chapter two.³ The reason I've chosen to adopt this definition is that I am studying religion within the tradition of political philosophy and it is the political features of religion that most interest me. Durkheim's definition is helpful to my aim, because it focuses on how religion unites groups of people. Unlike Durkheim, I'm less interested in how unified their beliefs happen to be and focus more on the way in which religious communities, which often comprise members with vastly different moral beliefs and commitments, organize and react to matters of common interest. My definition is quite different from James's, whose work focuses on private religious experience and explicitly avoids discussion of religious institutions; however, his approach to the term 'divine' is meant to invoke the 'godlike' and therefore include religions such as Buddhism and transcendental idealism, which are (strictly speaking) atheistic. Furthermore, James comments that 'the divine' excludes dogmatic atheists who have "shown a temper, which, psychologically considered, is indistinguishable from religious zeal," because to include such brands of avowed atheism as religion would stretch the meaning of religion beyond what is convenient "however defensible it might remain on logical grounds" (James 2004, 28). I

³ Durkheim defines religion as: "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions – beliefs and practices that unite its adherents in a single moral community called a church" (Durkheim 2001, 46), while William James defines religion as: "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they consider divine" (James 1982, 17).

included the word ‘identity’ because my definition includes anyone who considers themselves a member of a religion and excludes anyone who maintains that they have no religion.

Like religion, secularism is an extremely variable term and it would be too great an undertaking to examine the full breadth of its varied meanings. I’ve seen it applied to such varied phenomena as: science, philosophy, music, art, Christmas, Judaism, Islam, Christianity, morality, ethics, nationalism, the West, the state, branches of the medieval church, and ideology.

Nevertheless, I advance a tentative definition here to give the reader some indication of what to expect. *Secularism is a set of beliefs, practices, institutions and identities that place absolute political authority in the hands of the sovereign people, as opposed to some particular divine being.* Like the divine, the sovereign people has been variously represented in different states at different times. The third and fourth chapters of my dissertation, *From Souls to Citizens: Social Imaginaries; and Secular Ideologies*, will explore some of the representations that have claimed to represent the sovereign people. Benedict Anderson’s notion of the nation as an imagined community and Charles Taylor’s notion of social imaginaries are important sources and will be taken up in greater detail in those chapters.⁴ A few brief notes on this definition will be helpful here. First, I take Charles Taylor’s examination of secularism in *A Secular Age* (2007) as a helpful starting point – but whereas he is focused primarily on existential secularism and the changes that took place in North Atlantic civilization between 1500 and 2000 to transform religion from something that was a general feature of existence to something that was no longer

⁴ Benedict Anderson defines the nation as: “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 2006, 5) Taylor defines a social imaginary as: “a largely unstructured and inarticulate understanding of our whole situation, within which particular features of our world show up for us in the sense they have. It can never be adequately expressed in the form of explicit doctrines, because of its very unlimited and indefinite nature. That is another reason for speaking here about an imaginary and not a theory” (Taylor 2010, 309).

needed, I am interested in political secularism and the changes that made the Church an integral part of political life in 1500 only to become marginalized by the sovereign state and the interstate system of international law. While Taylor focuses on Weber's notion of 'disenchantment' whereby exclusive humanism came to replace a world populated by spirits and demons⁵, I am interested in Weber's claim that:

It is absolutely essential for every political association to appeal to the naked violence of coercive means in the face of outsiders as well as in the face of internal enemies. It is only this very appeal to violence that constitutes a political association in our terminology. The state is an association that claims the monopoly of the *legitimate use of violence*, and cannot be defined in any other manner (Weber 1958, 334).

Finally, I want to note that my overall evaluation of secularism and religion is that they are each cultural tools that contain both positive and negative attributes. My focus on the violence that I find to be integral to understanding the secular state should not be taken to imply that we ought to abandon secular state institutions in favour of religious ways of living. Sometimes it may be salutary to have a single institution in charge of the legitimate use of force. Violence plagues every human society and there are many instances where the state's monopoly over violence has led to better social outcomes than its absence would have. But we don't want to fall into a trap whereby we ignore certain types of violence (e.g. the police or the prison system) simply because we see them as preferable to other types of violence (e.g. mobsters or drug trafficking). I believe that neither the sovereign state system nor public religiosity are likely to

⁵ This is an oversimplification of Taylor's work, as he explains that the full story of how we arrived in 'a secular age' is crucial to properly understanding it: "Now in a way, the ultimate goal is to arrive at such a contrast, or at least to get into focus our situation in 2000 by means of such a comparative description. But I don't think it can properly be done if one tries to elide the history....it is a crucial fact of our present spiritual predicament that it is historical; that is, our understanding of ourselves and where we stand is partly defined by our sense of having come to where we are, of having overcome a previous condition. Thus we are widely aware of living in a 'disenchanted' universe; and our use of this word bespeaks our sense that it was once enchanted" (Taylor 2007, 28).

disappear anytime soon and hope to show that a search for common ground and mutual understanding between secularists and religious believers is the best way forward.

4. Thesis

I will argue that religion has persisted because it functions as a social system and often provides the same sorts of social goods to people that people expect from secularism. Philosophers should understand that religion is often a vehicle for social movements and should be approached in terms of politics rather than metaphysics. Because religions have come to be understood as metaphysical systems of thought, their material relations with state structures can be difficult to see. By contrasting medieval political philosophy with the origins of secular political theory in early-modern Europe, I argue that this historical transition does not mark a separation of church and state, as is conventionally understood, but actually accomplishes the expropriation of religious functions by the state. In medieval political philosophy, the state functions within a divine order, but this hierarchy is reversed in the secularizing vision of natural law theory, where the church functions within the sovereign order of the state. When the state takes over the moral authority of the church, it appropriates the tasks of regulating the ways different religions are allowed to practice. Thus, a restriction of religion's power always means an increase in state power.

Consequently, the modern, secular state cannot be mistaken for a neutral arbiter between competing religious perspectives nor as neutral towards religion in general. The modern state is itself a very interested party in how religion is expressed, understood, and in which religions are supported by the state. When religion is examined as a social system, the mechanics of secularism and the various policies the state enacts to manage religious belief, come into focus.

Secular ideologies have attempted to reform society on the basis of rationally defensible principles, seeking to relegate religion to a private realm. These attempts have failed to produce the peaceful, rationally ordered system of global politics prophesied by secularization theorists. The 'religion-like' features of secularism are revealed whenever we attempt to organize and differentiate communities with the allegiances, hierarchies and symbols that human societies prefer over abstract principles. I argue that when the official role of religion diminishes, the vacuum is filled by secular political ideologies such as liberalism, communism and nationalism, which set about fighting over allegiances, hierarchies and symbols in a manner remarkably similar to the ways critics of religion believe it gives rise to conflict. Liberalism ignores religious and cultural difference to focus on the state and the economy. However, when legal and economic institutions are imposed on states and the sovereignty of the people is ignored on the basis that they are 'uncivilized' (steeped in superstitious and religious culture) – the cultural 'neutrality' of liberalism is perceived by the colonized as a sham. Communism sought to combat the exploitation inherent in liberalism by taking state power to excise religion from society. Religion, Marx believed, was produced by the mystifications that allowed capitalist exploitation and prophesied the demise of religion with the rise of communism. Yet most communist state projects have failed and their failures have often been accompanied by the same sort of mystifications that Marx criticized. When communist states proved to be corrupt and inept, their peoples turned to their older religious communities in order to counter the hegemony of party-state orthodoxy. Finally, nationalist projects have adopted racial and cultural logics that are every bit as mired in their own arbitrary particularisms as religious beliefs. Following the secularization of states that forced religion to live behind the political scenes as a 'private option', people increasingly returned to religion when the state started to fail them. The re-

emergence of religion as political is visible where secular states fail, because religion appears untainted by state machinations and exhibits an identity-saturated vitality.

When secular communities hold pernicious beliefs, the solution is to challenge those beliefs, not disband the community. Likewise, religious communities may sometimes promote pernicious beliefs, but this does not necessarily delegitimize their validity as communities. We need not accept troublesome religious beliefs and practices, but this doesn't mean that the religions themselves or the important role they play in people's lives can be dismissed. The artificial binaries of xenophobia on the one hand and cultural relativism on the other can be bridged with a revised understanding of the relationship between religion and the secular state. The four features of religion most commonly attacked are: institutions, imagined communities, emotional enthusiasm, and tradition—yet each of these problematic features of religion also perform salutary functions in society. Although examples abound where religions default to violent solutions in response to difference, it is important to recognize similar actions among our secular political institutions. Moreover, both religious and secular ways of living are capable of supporting a flourishing society. The complexity of religion's interaction with the secular state must be recognized so that we can develop more nuanced approaches to religious difference.

5. Methodology & Contribution to the Literature

My dissertation draws primarily on the emerging field of secular studies, political philosophy and sociology. As this interdisciplinary body of literature implies, my method of inquiry is shaped by the conviction that political philosophy must be grounded in empirical research. The interplay between human beings and their social institutions is as important as an abstract understanding of human nature (such as Locke and Hobbes's natural law theories) or an

abstract understanding of how social institutions ought to function (in the tradition of Plato or Rawls).

Charles Taylor's (2007) *A Secular Age* provided the foundation for much of my research. A key concept that I draw from Taylor is what he calls 'social imaginaries', which are "the ways in which [people] imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations which are normally met, and the deeper normative images that underlie these expectations" (Taylor 2007, 171). Social imaginaries, in contrast to philosophy, are often acted upon uncritically and accepted due to the seeming naturalness of existing social relations. I see much of my present work as a contribution to Taylor's work in *A Secular Age* which, as I noted above, focuses on the existential dimensions of secularism rather than its political dimensions. My work attempts to supplement Taylor's, which he later acknowledged gave too little appreciation of how secularism was constructed through colonial encounters (Taylor 2010). Furthermore, I find he gives a somewhat rosy view of the political results of secularism – making it sound like we have gained socially and politically and framing what we have left behind in our religious past as a spiritual loss to heartless bureaucratic rationality. My focus on ideology aims to show that the immense power of the modern state has brought about new possibilities for growth and development, as well as new forms of violence and oppression. A critique of secularism requires a new appreciation of the ongoing need for state institutions to help solve social problems as well as a sober look at the dangers of the power these institutions wield.

Like Taylor, I deny the 'subtraction story' of secularism, whereby secularism is understood as what is left over after religion has receded from public life. While Taylor acknowledges a major shift between the 'religious' mindset of fifteenth century Latin-

Christendom and the ‘secular’ mindset of contemporary North Atlantic civilization, he argues that this shift was premised on a myriad of micro-changes to the social landscape, rather than the steady disappearance of religion. He understands this existential shift as the replacement of a ‘porous’ self (open to spirits and divine contact) with a ‘buffered’ self (closed to such spiritual phenomena). Taylor’s account focuses on Deism and Natural Law theory as intermediate stages in the development of secularism, as these philosophies provided a transitional stage, wherein God and nature were understood as compatible and obeyed many of the same laws.

Natural Law theorists such as Hobbes, Spinoza, Grotius, and Locke all saw religion as a major political problem and made the state’s relationship with religion of central importance in their work. A key part of my account of the rise of secularism is that legal and political philosophy came to play a much larger role in social organization than was previously the case. A historical, sociological examination of how the philosophical ideas of sovereignty doctrine and international law were institutionalized is useful in unpacking the complexities of the social imaginaries where secular and religious ideas are enmeshed. There are a number of places where I seem highly critical of the philosophers whose work I examine – particularly where they claim to have discovered culturally and religiously neutral principles according to which global society ought to be organized. My aim here is not to be uncharitable or to bring, unfairly, a contemporary lens to examine a previous age. Rather, it is to show the extensive role that philosophy has played in constructing international political norms that are not neutral, and that continue to exert power in ways that generate conflict. To expose this further, I explore the sovereignty doctrine of Hobbes and Grotius to uncover the foundational role it played in the origins and rise of the secular state, international law and politics. I show how it determined the religious justifications of colonial projects and present-day post-colonial consequences.

Sociology is particularly helpful in developing a conceptual understanding of ‘secular’ and ‘religious’ social imaginaries because it captures the diversity of religious practice by focusing on the lived experiences of religious practitioners. The classical secularization thesis, which held that religion would steadily recede from public life, was once considered to be the ‘paradigmatic’ theory in sociology (Casanova 1994). The fact that this has failed to take place, coupled with the observation that the secular social spheres have expanded (without any necessary reduction in religion’s importance) leads Casanova to update the theory of secularism. He re-focuses it on the functional differentiation of the secular spheres (such as the state, the economy, and science); such differentiation becomes the defensible ‘core’ of Casanova’s secularization theory. Norris and Inglehart (2004, 4) similarly attempt to explain the continued vitality of religion, using their extensive research to argue “that the importance of religiosity persists most strongly among vulnerable populations, especially those living in poorer nations, facing personal survival-threatening risks” (Norris and Inglehart 2004, 4). Mark Juergensmeyer’s work *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (1993) stands out as one of the earliest predictions that religious conflict would eclipse ideological conflict. Rather than seeing religious activists as an irrational upset in the steady secularization of politics, he sees them as “waging popularist struggles against Western culture and its political ideology” (Juergensmeyer 1993, xiii). Alfred Stepan’s (2011) work reveals that state secularism is a much more variable phenomenon than is conventionally understood. He applies Eisenstadt’s theory of ‘multiple modernities’ to note the variety of policies that secular states adopt towards religion – none of which manage to entirely separate it from state policy.

Post-colonial theory challenges political philosophy’s attempts to understand and organize society on a secular, rational basis. Post-colonial theory exposes the Eurocentrism and

imperialist logic of many contemporary state and international institutions, unsettling the ‘neutral, universally applicable’ self-image to which modern secular politics aspire. However, we cannot merely un-think influential concepts like sovereignty and secularism. While I find the critiques launched by many post-colonial theorists contain a large amount of depth, modern conditions require universal principles on which to base institutional change. Talal Asad’s approach to religion is another important source for this dissertation. He examines a complex of connections with the secular, arguing that it “is neither continuous with the religious...nor a simple break from it” (Asad 2003, 25). Furthermore, like him, “I assume...that there is nothing essentially religious, nor any universal essence that defines ‘sacred languages’ or ‘sacred experience.’ But I also assume that there were breaks between Christian and secular life in which words and practices were rearranged, and new discursive grammars replaced previous ones” (Asad 2003, 25). Community membership and its relationship to traditions of authority is a major theme in my discussion of Europe’s early-modern political philosophers. However, unlike Asad, I am interested in critiquing liberalism – both to find its salutary features as well as areas in which it requires reform. I am also interested in the ways in which Marxism has contributed to the secular discourse, albeit in very different ways to liberalism.

Armed with the insights gained from the empirical research of sociologists and anthropologists of religion, I reassess some of the major political critiques of religion that see its institutions as corrupt, its communities as subversive of state authority, its beliefs as excessively emotional, and its traditions as antiquated and oppressive. While all of these are valid criticisms, my more nuanced approach balances these problematic features with an appreciation of why so many people continue to flock to religion. Sometimes its institutions provide valuable meeting places for those excluded from state institutions and provide a gathering place for people to voice

dissatisfaction with secular state institutions. The traditions that are integral parts of many religions are found in secular nations as well.

6. Chapter Descriptions

I begin by arguing that religion is too complex a social category to reduce to its supernatural content. When religion is associated primarily with its metaphysical propositions rather than its other social content, there is a tendency to dismiss the concerns of religious believers as irrational. I then contrast the metaphysical view with definitions from sociology, which sees religion as a social formation; psychology, which sees religion as primarily about spirituality and emotional experience; and political philosophy, which sees religion as a social force in society that has the capacity to both unite and divide. I argue that none of these approaches captures the breadth of religious phenomena, but that a political approach is the best to take when trying to understand religious conflict. When political philosophers understand religions as communities, it is easier to see the value of approaching religious conflict through compromise, rather than seeing such disagreements as the inevitable outcome of incommensurable beliefs.

In the third chapter, I examine how early-modern political philosophy developed the theory of sovereignty doctrine to help deal with religious and cultural difference. This, I argue, was the origin of the secular state – which set about subordinating religious prerogatives and institutions in order to maintain itself. Sovereignty doctrine came to be instantiated in international law and claimed to be both universally applicable and religiously neutral. I argue that while sovereignty doctrine did manage to establish peace in Europe, it simultaneously justified colonialism abroad. This serves to undermine the presumed neutrality of international law. Furthermore, I establish a major transition in political philosophy – from a medieval focus

on how to encourage people to limit and subordinate their desires to the more modern view that politics was best understood in terms of how best to achieve what people desire.

In chapter four, I look at secular beliefs that have arisen to make religious affiliation optional in contemporary politics. I note different ways that secular ideals have attempted to reform society on the basis of the principles of liberalism and communism. Noting the tendency of liberal and communist states to fall into nationalism, I question whether societies are capable of functioning on the basis of principle alone. I then examine the dual-nature of nationalism, which has the capacity to forge strong bonds of solidarity between large numbers of people and the capacity to violently exclude. Where ideologies were once on the rise and spreading across the globe, they are increasingly met with the particularisms of culture and religion that both oppose and transform those abstract values. Abstract values based on principles do not seem to diminish the amount of conflict in society, any more than cultural or religiously specific values.

Chapter five returns to the topic of religion in political philosophy. I examine four features of religion that have come under attack: its institutions, the communities it forms, its capacity to provoke emotional responses, and its attachment to the traditions of the past. I argue that religious organizations, like political organizations, have a tendency to produce negative effects as well as positive. Religious institutions, like political ones, need to be measured by universal standards – but it is possible to criticize those institutions when they fail to live up to these standards, without placing unnecessarily broad restrictions on their practitioners. When people feel they are being targeted as a result of their religious beliefs, or that society is not making room for them, it is natural for them to feel alienated. Religious protests and other emotionally charged acts are to be expected when those feelings of alienation are not addressed. When secularists accept the moral validity of those feelings, they can hold religious groups to

account for their pernicious beliefs, while encouraging religious believers to better reconcile modern, moral principles with the traditions of their communities.

II. Religion: Beyond Metaphysics

In this chapter I examine six different definitions of religion that each focus on a different feature of religion. I argue that religion is a sort of umbrella category that covers such wide-ranging phenomena that each of these six definitions fail to capture its diversity. Nevertheless, religious practices are so important to so many people and have such enormous social and political effects that religion cannot simply be dismissed as a meaningless category, too broad to be of any practical importance. Therefore, I argue that scholars of religion ought to focus on narrower dimensions of religion that pertain to the particular features of religion that they wish to study. Since my area of study is social and political thought – I will spend the rest of my dissertation focusing on these features of religion.

I begin by outlining the metaphysical approach to religion taken by the ‘New Atheists’. They define religion as a form of metaphysical belief in supernatural beings (gods). This definition sees religion as a pernicious force in the world that uses mystification to prop-up unjustified authority. I note some of the features that make their definition attractive and some versions of their arguments where they seem to be correct, but argue that the conclusions they draw are too sweeping and ideologically motivated. I will then contrast the metaphysical definition of religion with definitions that have been developed by social scientists and political philosophers who study religion and argue that, despite its initial plausibility, the metaphysical approach is neither the most accurate nor the most helpful understanding of religion in the modern world. Instead, religion is best understood in terms of its social content, the types of communities it forms, and the political relationships it has with other social phenomena. Finally, I look at some of the features of the concept of religion that make it difficult to define. However,

if we are worried about the political effects that religion is having on the world, understanding it primarily in political terms is the best strategy to meaningfully engage with its practitioners.

1. Religion as a Metaphysical View of the Universe; Religion and Science

Is religion fundamentally about metaphysics? Philosophers concerned with the explanation and justification of belief have long been troubled by the metaphysical claims made by religious believers. Such claims contradict what science tells us about the nature of the universe and are based solely on faith, an unjustified type of belief. Furthermore, unjustified metaphysical beliefs seem to lead to the uncritical acceptance of social beliefs that frequently lead to the social conflicts that religion is so frequently associated with. If religion is fundamentally about metaphysics then it can only serve to mislead and mystify. This view establishes a series of logical connections that each seem to follow from one another, such that:

belief in the supernatural = faith that cannot be justified ->

refusal to believe in empirical evidence ->

belief in irrational principles ->

irrational actions ->

dangerous outcomes.

However, anthropologists and social scientists have often seen religion's social dimension as being more important than its metaphysical content. There is also a rich tradition of philosophy, from at least as far back as Machiavelli, which examined religion solely in social and political terms. I begin with two interrelated claims. First, that religion need not make metaphysical claims that are opposed to science – reason and religion can be understood as compatible; second, while religions often do have metaphysical content that is opposed to science, even when science and religion are incompatible there is still a large area of religious

life that is not metaphysical. This will set up my argument that understanding the non-metaphysical features of religion explains more about contemporary religious life (especially religious conflict) than a primarily metaphysical conception does. It is not that the metaphysical approach to religion is wrong. In many cases it is correct, but metaphysically problematic conceptions of religion are not sufficient enough conditions to understand contemporary religious conflicts. I argue that the complexity of religion undermines the series of logical connections laid out above.

The ‘New Atheists’ have consistently used a metaphysical definition of religion to guide their arguments. They have a number of good reasons for doing so and there are a number of prominent religious intellectuals and believers who, despite disagreeing with atheists on the truth of religion, have reinforced the view that this is the correct approach to take. The New Atheists also launch a number of social critiques of religion, but since I will address the social critiques of religion in the final chapter, I’ll confine myself to their treatment of metaphysical questions here. I begin by arguing that the New Atheists are right about the pernicious effects of certain forms of religious belief. However, I note that the phenomena they examine are too narrow to capture the complexity of what religion is.

The New Atheists see religion as a type of belief about the nature of the universe and our place within it. Daniel Dennett defines religions as “social systems whose participants avow belief in a supernatural agent or agents whose approval is to be sought” (Dennett 2006, 9).⁶ Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and the late Christopher Hitchens all have very similar

⁶ He does note, as I’ll discuss in greater detail below, that owing to the fact that it is not a ‘natural kind’, religion cannot be neatly separated from related phenomena and that any definition ought to be tentative and probably won’t be free of counter-examples. Still, Dennett never strays from the notion that religion is fundamentally about belief and about the supernatural and pays insufficient attention to the implications of its being a social system. Of the New Atheists, he offers the most nuanced approach, but it still falls victim to the thinking in terms of the strong logical connections I’ve laid out above.

understandings of religion. Religions are hypotheses about the existence of supernatural beings who created the world.⁷ Unlike scientific hypotheses about the natural world, however, empirical evidence is unable to shake religious belief in the supernatural. In contrast to empirical observation, faith is defined as unjustified, unreasonable belief and is the basis of religion.⁸

There are a number of convincing features that this definition has. First, it seems to apply to most people who profess a religious faith.⁹ They do often make reference to a supernatural being who created the universe. This definition also explains why many religious people in North America continue to resist even reading about evolution or the big bang (or having their children learn about it) – as they feel their faith is threatened by an alternate cosmological story.¹⁰ Most importantly, however, this definition explains why atheists complain that it is so difficult to have a ‘rational’ conversation with people of religious faith on any topic related to religion. At the end of the conversation, they will often adhere to whatever position of faith they began with; sometimes they will not even offer up reasons for the things they believe and maintain that faith alone is sufficient to ‘justify’ their belief. Dawkins notes the reaction of the faithful to a study that found that prayer had no measureable effect on patients recovering from coronary bypass surgery.

Bob Barth, the spiritual director of the Missouri prayer ministry which supplied some of the experimental prayers, said: 'A person of faith would say that this study is interesting,

⁷ Richard Dawkins defines ‘the God Hypothesis’ as the idea that “there exists a superhuman, supernatural intelligence that deliberately designed the universe and everything in it, including us” (Dawkins 2006, 52). He later calls the God Hypothesis “the factual premise of religion” (Dawkins 2006, 158).

⁸ Dawkins argues: “Faith is an evil precisely because it requires no justification and brooks no argument” (Dawkins 2008, 308). Dennett quotes Dawkins on faith, going on to contrast the untested faith of religious adherents and the “exquisitely detailed, positive results” of scientists (Dennett 2006, 230-233).

⁹ A Pew Research Poll found that a majority of Christians of all denominations in the US (with the exception of Orthodox Christians) have *absolute certainty* that a *personal God* exists (Lugo 2008, 28).

¹⁰ In 2014, Pew Research Centre published a study on Americans’ views of evolution. It found that: “Almost 150 years after Charles Darwin published his ground breaking work *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, Americans are still fighting over evolution. If anything, the controversy has grown in both size and intensity. In the last decade, debates over how evolution should be taught in schools have been heard in school boards, town councils and legislatures in more than half the states” (Masci 2009).

but we've been praying a long time and we've seen prayer work, we know it works, and the research on prayer and spirituality is just getting started.' Yeah, right: we know from our *faith* that prayer works, so if evidence fails to show it we'll just soldier on until finally we get the result we want (Dawkins 2006, 66).

It is possible to agree with the metaphysical approach to religion adopted by the New Atheists, but disagree with the tone in which it is presented.¹¹ While empirical, scientific study is the best way to understand the universe, liberal commitments to pluralism call for a certain respect for the deeply held beliefs of others.¹² The New Atheists might be correct in their message and wrong in the disrespectful way they present it, but this seems dissatisfying. Our commitments to pluralism should not override our commitments to the truth. If religion is in fact a set of metaphysical propositions about the universe, then religion is necessarily opposed to science. If religion's primary purpose is to tell people how the universe started (e.g. creationism) or why human nature is the way it is (e.g. God made us thus), then science will have its own methods to arrive at its own answers. Those answers will be different from those provided by religion and the two sets of answers will be mutually exclusive. Furthermore, this view of religion means that the epistemic tools of religion are not empirical in nature (or else they would be scientific). Dennett goes so far as to say that the "mists of incomprehension and failure of communication are not just annoying impediments to rigorous refutation; they are themselves design features of religions worth looking at closely in their own right" (Dennett 2006, 217). This means that the epistemic authority of religious interpretation is left entirely in the hands of the priest/king/holy book/traditions of the believers in question. In Dawkins's words

¹¹ The caustic tone with which the New Atheists discuss religion is a major reason for their notoriety. Dawkins likens raising children religious to sexual abuse (Dawkins 2006). While Christopher Hitchens (2009) titled his book *The End of Faith: How Religion Poisons Everything*.

¹² Religion is the primary reason that John Rawls reformulates his political ideals between *Theory of Justice* (1971) and *Political Liberalism* (2005) to remain as neutral as possible on competing comprehensive doctrines. See the discussion on overlapping consensus below.

“Fundamentalists know they are right because they have read the truth in a holy book and they know, in advance, that nothing will budge them from their belief. The truth of the holy book is an axiom, not the end product of a process of reasoning” (Dawkins 2006, 282).¹³ If religion is a metaphysical proposition about the world, it is therefore not only untrue (scientifically speaking) but contains within it the seeds of authoritarianism. Religion would therefore be nothing more than false belief premised on unjustified authority. Our liberal attitudes might tell us to adjust our tone, but in the end liberalism also demands that we rid ourselves of unjustified authority. Framing our definition of religion in terms of a metaphysical belief makes it relatively plain that there is no reconciliation possible between truth and religious faith.

1.1 Religion – an evolutionary mistake?

So where do religious beliefs come from?¹⁴ Dennett and Dawkins both believe that the near universal rise of religions across all cultures means there must be an evolutionary explanation for it.¹⁵ The approach of the New Atheists has been to understand faith in terms of a mistaken belief that persists as the result of unjustified authority. Dennett believes that religion began because of an accident in our neurological development, whereby we mistakenly began to attribute agency to any complex, moving phenomenon (Dennett 2006, 114). Dawkins believes

¹³ Furthermore, Dawkins believes that even non-fundamentalists are complicit in the dogmatism adhered to by fundamentalists because they teach that “unquestioning faith is a virtue” (Dawkins 2006, 286). There seems to be a tension between the belief held by Dawkins and Dennett that unquestioning faith, immune to evidence, is a core part of religion and the annoyance they express at attempts by religious believers to latch onto any evidence they can to try to prove their religious claims (see, for example, Dawkins 2006, 59-64).

¹⁴ Dennett attacks the idea that ‘there have always been religions’, but curiously enough, he admits that something like religion might be older than language itself. He asks, “What were our ancestors like before there was anything like religion? Were they like bands of chimpanzees?” (Dennett 2006, 102). Robert N. Bellah, as I’ll explain below, gives a very strong and well-reasoned alternate explanation for the role religion played in evolution starting from precisely this question.

¹⁵ Dawkins and Dennett each provide part of an evolutionary theory for why religion arose in the first place. Dawkins references Dennett’s research on the intentional stance, to show that religion might be “an accidental by-product – a misfiring of something useful” (Dawkins 2006, 188). Dennett uses Dawkins’ meme theory to explain the persistence of religious ideas, particularly the possibility that religious ideas might act like a virus – evolving over time to spread to other humans, not for the benefit of its hosts but rather to improve its own propagation (Dennett 2006).

that this mistaken belief was further reinforced as the result of religious memes that use ‘marketing’, ignorance, and authority to pass themselves on, in a similar way to the ‘selfish’ behaviour he ascribes to genes (Dawkins 2006, 191).

Where does the idea of the supernatural come from in the first place? According to Dennett it most likely has something to do with what he calls the ‘intentional stance’. The intentional stance begins with the evolutionary mechanisms that interpret motion. A startle mechanism allows an animal to detect predators. However, if the startle mechanism is set off too easily, then the animal might lose out on its own meal and needlessly run away. An over-active startle mechanism can become disadvantageous. Such instances exhibit what Justin Barrett calls a ‘hyperactive agent detection device’ (HADD) (Dennett 2006, 108). Many animals can therefore mistakenly react to falling snow the way they would react to a predator. As animals got increasingly clever and their agent detection mechanisms became more finely tuned, they began to recognize increasingly complex features of the agents they detected. They also learned to search for certain types of behaviour (e.g. interpreting certain patterns as warnings of a predator and others as the opportunity for prey) and also to deceive one another (e.g. a bird faking an injury to lead a predator away from its nest). Animals can be said to adopt the intentional stance when they see things in the world around them as:

- *agents* with
 - limited *beliefs* about the world,
 - specific *desires*, and
 - enough common sense to do the *rational* thing given those beliefs and desires
- (Dennett 2006, 110).

Dennett believes that “[s]o powerful is our innate urge to adopt the intentional stance that we have real difficulty turning it off when it is no longer appropriate” (Dennett 2006, 112). He then connects the intentional stance (adopted by a number of animals) to the uniquely human characteristics of language and the burial of our dead. Language, he believes, allowed us to give greater independent life to the objects we adopted the intentional stance towards. Language allows us to dwell on the associations we make with those close to us. When our loved ones die, we need to reform the many habits we’ve developed. We may even need to adjust our view of the world and the intentional objects in it that we are close to. However, we also need to distance ourselves from the body of our loved one, even as we remember them and project them abstractly into the world through language. Over time, we began to talk about ‘intentional objects’ in a way that gave them increasing independence (such as loved ones who have passed on) – until they became spirits and gods and other supernatural phenomena. Dennett concludes “At the root of human belief in gods lies an instinct on a hair trigger: the disposition to attribute agency – beliefs and desires and other mental states – to anything complicated that moves” (Dennett 2006, 114).¹⁶ So the earliest origins of religion, according to Dennett, are to be found in this misfiring of an evolved capacity to detect agency – but how did religions continue to take hold and develop? This is particularly troubling if religious belief and practice are as biologically costly as Dennett seems to argue (Dennett 2006, 189).¹⁷

¹⁶ In addition to Dennett’s argument that gods developed out of a misfiring of the intentional stance, Dawkins adds the idea that our brains are naturally predisposed towards dualism and teleology (Dawkins 2006, 179-181). A dualist theory of mind predisposes us towards the idea of spirits, while a teleological view of nature predisposes us towards various creation myths.

¹⁷ See also Dawkins (2006, 166): “Though the details differ across the world, no known culture lacks some version of the time-consuming, wealth-consuming, hostility-provoking rituals, the anti-factual, counter-productive fantasies of religion.”

Dawkins originally developed his meme theory to combat the idea that only genes evolve and are subject to Darwinian natural selection. However, given his stance that religion is a harmful force in the world, which he likens to a virus, he needs his meme theory to explain how religion might be adopted by humans without benefitting them for this argument to accomplish what he intends. Dawkins states that:

because Darwinian natural selection abhors waste, any ubiquitous feature of a species – such as religion – must have conferred some advantage or it wouldn't have survived. But I hinted that the advantage doesn't have to redound to the survival or reproductive success of the individual....And it doesn't even have to be genes that benefit. Any *replicator* will do. Genes are only the most obvious examples of replicators. Other candidates include computer viruses, and memes – units of cultural inheritance.... (Dawkins 2006, 191).

Dawkins uses the idea of memes to combat the argument that the ubiquity of religion is a sign that it contains truth value or a sign that, even if it has no truth value, religious belief has a positive effect on its believers (i.e. he maintains that religion is both incorrect *and* that it is harmful). Memes are packets of information that (like genes) replicate, mutate, and compete with one another over time (Dennett 2006, 341). These three features allow memes (like genes) to take part in evolution. Furthermore, since memes become important parts of the environment for other memes, it is possible for memes to evolve without any necessary benefit to their hosts – so long as they are successful in the environment of other memes. An example of a meme that Dawkins thinks would fare well in a meme filled world, but that (presumably) does not benefit the host is the idea that “you will survive your own death” (Dawkins 2006, 199). He likens religion to a ‘virus of the mind’ and uses evidence of the rapid expansion and mutation of

religions as proof that there is a strong pattern of resemblance between Darwinian evolution and the evolving changes and propagation of religious ideas.¹⁸

I'll compare the virus theory of religious development to Robert N. Bellah's theory below. Before that, I want to mention some of the potential flaws with meme theory that Dennett and Dawkins attempt to address. The first, is that there is no agreed upon physical-substrate meant to serve the role in meme theory that DNA serves in evolutionary theory.¹⁹ Dennett notes that some proponents of memes have attempted to identify them with particular brain states. "But on current understandings of how the brain might store cultural information, it is unlikely that any independently *identifiable*, common brain structures, in different brains, could ever be isolated as the material substrate for a particular meme" (Dennett 2006, 349). In particular, Dennett himself denies that beliefs of any sort can be identified with physical realizers (Dennett 1991). This problem is further compounded by those who want to include internet videos and scraps of paper with drawings on them as memes. Neither Dennett nor Dawkins sees this as a problem. Dennett uses the example of 'words' as not having a physical substrate. Words exist, but they exist as much on pieces of paper as in our minds.²⁰

¹⁸ Dennett helpfully points out a popular misconception about meme theory. Because Dawkins uses it to explain the existence of religion and since he is no fan to religion, he has likened memes to viruses. "Although this jarring claim needs to be considered as a major possibility, we should not forget that the vast majority of memes, like the vast majority of bacterial and viral symbionts that inhabit our bodies, are neutral or even helpful (from the perspective of host fitness)" (Dennett 2006, 184).

¹⁹ "Some people have objected to memetic explanations, on various grounds that usually stem from the fact that memes are not entirely like genes. The exact physical nature of a gene is now known (it is a sequence of DNA) whereas that of memes is not, and different memeticists confuse one another by switching from one physical medium to another. Do memes exist only in brains? Or is every paper copy and electronic copy of, say, a particular limerick also entitled to be called a meme?" (Dawkins 2006, 192).

²⁰ Meme theory is very helpful in explaining a number of cultural phenomena. Dawkins uses the example of a game of telephone that attempts to teach children how to fold origami boats. There is a certain amount of drift and return in the models that different generations of designers use (Dawkins 2006, 193-196). He also gives the example of the evolution of words and languages, which seem to fit the model of what he is talking about well. However, if meme theory is to gain scientific validity, it seems memeticists will have to settle on a physical substrate meant to play the explanatory role of DNA. This will be difficult, as Dawkins notes that "One respect in which they are not like genes is that there is nothing obviously corresponding to chromosomes or loci or alleles or sexual recombination. The

My objection to meme theory is specific to the use that Dawkins puts it in *The God Delusion*. As I noted above, the reason Dawkins discusses meme theory is to demonstrate that religion, despite its ubiquity in human civilization, might be harmful to humans and only helpful to itself. If we are memetic creatures, then why should meme fitness be seen as “unhelpful” for the individual? If the good of an organism is, in evolutionary terms, defined in terms of its survival and propagation – it seems that the function of a memetic creature would be in the transmission and propagation of its memes. I spend more time and energy focused on memes than I do on either procreation or survival.²¹ My point is that if memes (or memeplexes) are an accurate representation of ideas like religion in the way that Dawkins argues, then humans are not just biological creatures, we are *memetic creatures* as well.

A memetic creature would feel more at ease when surrounded by familiar memes and resist when predator memes (e.g. demanding that one abandon one’s religious beliefs in favour of science or vice-versa) are nearby. When we understand ourselves as memetic creatures sacrificing oneself for one’s memes no longer seems like such a bad idea. Socrates, who willingly drank hemlock rather than flee Athens, is perhaps the paradigmatic example of an individual who sacrificed themselves for a meme. Moreover, the meme that sacrificing oneself for the survival of their community, which certainly isn’t helpful to the individual, is incredibly well adapted to the perpetuation of one’s community.

meme pool is less structured and less organized than the gene pool” (Dawkins 2006, 192). Finding such a physical substrate, he believes, may not be possible.

²¹ Of course, there would still be a biological nature to which I’d feel myself attached. But if memes might develop that are helpful to other memes but not to the organism that holds them, the way Dawkins argues, then memes are somewhat insulated from biological imperatives. This is even more the case for ‘memeplexes’, the term Dawkins uses for complexes of memes that organize other memes in an already meme saturated pool (Dawkins 2006, 197). Memes such as words (and perhaps languages), also seem to sense easy prey – the minds of children are primed to pick up new languages and ideas, in contrast to older minds that have a harder time of it. Dawkins also sees children as particularly ‘vulnerable’ to the ‘virus’ of religion (Dawkins 2006, 311-344). Language and culture are some of the other social kinds that children seem primed to adopt. I will argue (below) that religion is similar to these sorts of social phenomena.

It may not be that religious memes are designed for the benefit of the individual – but rather for the greater benefit of humanity (or at least the community). Dennett and Dawkins might respond that this doesn't show that religious memes are good for the human organism. The common cold is also found in every human society yet it is not beneficial to our survival. This analogy doesn't work however, because the common cold encounters humans as another organism. There is an evolutionary 'arms-race' between the ability of humans to resist the common cold and the ability of the common cold to spread and last as long as possible. For the analogy to hold, religion would not have to encounter the biological organism of humanity in a parasitic way – rather it would have to encounter the meme of humanity in a parasitic way. A better analogy than the common cold's ubiquity in human societies would be a trait that humans themselves possess (such as language) – making it much more difficult to find a universally harmful example.²² If there is only a weak link between human memes and human biology (which Dawkins and Dennett both accept – despite not being dualists about the mind)²³, then

²² “We can expect that cultural parasites, like microbial parasites, exploit whatever preexisting systems come in handy. The sneezing reflex, for instance, is in the first place an adaptation for ridding the nasal passages of foreign irritants, but when a germ provokes sneezing, it is typically not the sneezer but the germ that is the principal beneficiary, getting a high-energy launching into a neighborhood where other potential hosts can take it in. Spreading germs and spreading memes may exploit similar mechanisms, such as irresistible urges to impart stories or other items of information to others, enhanced by traditions that heighten the length, intensity, and frequency of encounters with others who might be likely hosts” (Dennett 2006, 84). The sneezing reflex is a better example of the sort of thing religion would have to be to be similar to a virus. Originally, the sneezing reflex serves a purpose (clearing irritants), eventually – viruses and other nasty parasites exploit this trait to spread themselves. If religious memes were harmful (like viruses, rather than sneezes), then we would need to explain why humans (memetic creatures) adapted themselves to make it easier to get this virus. Presumably, Dennett and Dawkins both think that humans evolved to better resist viruses. There may be some harmful genes (such as the genes for sickle cell anemia) that humans have evolved themselves – but we know that under certain circumstances these genes are beneficial (the genes for sickle cell anemia also immunize against malaria). For the analogy with genes and natural selection to work, there must be certain situations in which religion is beneficial to either the human organism or the human memetic complex – either of which can be identified with a humans' fitness. These are not random situations (it may happen that getting a virus keeps you at home on a day when a predator might have eaten you) but systematic situations (in general it is bad to have the genes for sickle-cell, but it happens to be good just often enough for evolution to select for it in some situations) otherwise religious memes do not play the role that they are meant to play in Dawkins's theory.

²³ Meme theory seems to promote a kind of 'materialist dualism' in which ideas are not selected according to biological fitness, but rather to memetic fitness.

what is good for humans includes what is good for their memes in the same way as what is good for a species is good for its survival and reproduction. So, either there is a strong connection between memes and biological fitness (which is what Dawkins sets out to reject), or there is not a strong connection between them but what is 'good' for humans is not (to the extent that we are memetic creatures) defined in solely biological terms.

My point here is that Dennett and Dawkins fail to give culture (and by extension religion) the credit it deserves. Either the processes of culture ought to be understood as having produced memes that make humanity as a whole (or at least groups of humans) more fit for our environments (if there is a strong relation between memes and genes) or culture functions according to different mechanisms than biology and those mechanisms need their own study rather than being lumped in (by analogy only) with genes. Meme theory, regardless of whether it succeeds or fails, still leaves open the question – what is it about religion that is well adapted in such a way that it would be universally adopted?

Even if religion came about due to a 'misrecognition of agency, the way Dawkins and Dennett argue, this doesn't mean that we can discount its continuation and near universal adoption across human societies. Like the development of sovereign states, which will be discussed in the next chapter, religions may have evolved as a form of cultural technology. Robert N. Bellah's survey of the role that religion has played in human evolution makes a strong case that religion was fundamental in the early formation of human communities. He draws on biologists Marc Kirshner and John Gerhart's concept of 'conserved core processes' to explain how religion developed out of evolution (rather than being an 'accident'). 'Conserved core processes' are evolutionary developments which have persisted for long periods of evolutionary history. Religion, he argues, is a social development of a similar kind. At a certain point in

evolution, our human ancestors (like our primate relatives) developed the capacity for play. Play takes place in moments that don't directly impact our survival and propagation. It may involve mimicking moments that do play such a role (play fighting, or practicing escape from predators) but eventually it takes on a role that is more distinct and begins to be practiced for its own sake. Our ancestors became so used to play that it developed into a mimed, 'ritual' behaviour.²⁴ The development of mimetic ritual eventually allowed the formation of human society by creating what Durkheim called a sense of 'collective effervescence'. Bellah notes the continued differences that can be discerned between the 'collective effervescence' created by religious belief in contemporary religious society and its early religious expression:

The intensity of the feelings aroused by such a ritual led Durkheim to speak of a sense of the sacred. Prelinguistically, however, this must have been rather vague, if we can speak of it at all. In any case such a ritual was not "worship," something that develops considerably later in much more complex societies, nor is there a worship of society, but at most a feeling of there being something special about the assembled group that, in the ritual, gave rise to what Durkheim called "collective effervescence (Bellah 2011, 94).

Drawing on studies of primate behaviour and the role that 'play' had in the development of empathy, parental care, and socialization; Bellah argues that religion develops precisely at that point in human evolution where community expansion occurs.²⁵

According to this theory, the 'collective effervescence' provided by what Bellah terms 'serious ritual' allowed the initial expansion of primate communities into more advanced human societies. This brought with it the attendant capacity to cooperate more with other members of

²⁴ Bellah's argument has a number of more steps than my reproduction of it here. I've attempted to reproduce the most important steps to explain how religion might have played a psycho-social role in human evolution.

²⁵ "Many evolutionary biologists think human intelligence grew beyond that of any other species not because we were so clever technologically but because we developed very complex societies and the capacity for shared intention and shared attention that made an entirely new level of cooperation possible. Thus it is not surprising that what rituals and myths are about is socially interrelated 'persons,' their trials, foibles, and insights" (Bellah 2011, 104).

society and to approach non-members with increased hostility – a mark not only of religious groups but of any society. Given Bellah’s analysis, and if we take an evolutionary perspective, (something the New Atheists encourage us to do), religion should be understood as the means by which we share a common normative conception of ourselves and our place in the world, rather than a metaphysical proposition about it. Plausibly, religion is the way humans formed societies, distinguished between in-group and out-group members, by creating rituals that allowed our hominin ancestors the ability to distinguish between us and them.

1.2 Alternate approaches to religion’s metaphysics: pantheism and NOMA.

Using the New Atheists own premises, I have argued that religion could be an adaptive human technology, like language. Next, I will examine their assumption that religion is necessarily opposed to science.

It may be that most religious believers happen to be opposed to science or see their religious beliefs threatened by science, without *religion* being conceptually incompatible with it.²⁶ There are at least two positions that see an alternate role for religion in relation to metaphysics. One is to reform religious interpretation so that its metaphysics are consistent with scientific knowledge. Another is the theory that science and religion are made up of ‘non-overlapping magisteria’ – that the objects of science and religion exist in different social spheres. There is a long philosophical history of both of these interpretations. My aim here is to show that religion is still conceptually coherent without belief in the supernatural.

²⁶ Meme theory might actually help us to understand the relationship between those who feel their religious beliefs are threatened by science and those who don’t. It may be that individual memes (evolution and God’s creation of the universe) oppose one another without the entire weight of the ‘memplexes’ they compose opposing one another. This also helps to explain why so many religious people accept scientific memes (DNA treatment for cancer), while ardently maintaining their religious beliefs.

1.2a Pantheism: Religion as parallel to science.

Perhaps more surprising than how many religious people reject scientific cosmologies that conflict with their faith is the fact that many people are able to reconcile scientific cosmologies with their religious beliefs.²⁷ The metaphorical language that religion frequently adopts allows believers to adapt their interpretations so that they are compatible with modern science. Spinoza's pantheism, for example, develops an understanding of nature that sees God as co-extensive with it, rather than existing supernaturally apart from it. When discussing miracles, he argues against the notion that miracles are to be understood as supernatural occurrences. He states that as the source of the laws of nature, God would never act against them, as this would be acting contrary to God's own nature. The rational functioning of the universe is the surest sign of God's existence, according to Spinoza. "If therefore something happened in nature which did not follow from its laws, this would necessarily conflict with the order that God established in nature for ever by the universal laws of nature; it would hence be contrary to nature and its laws and, consequently, it would make us doubt our faith in all things and lead us to atheism" (Spinoza 2007, 87). Spinoza was just one of a number of philosophers, including St. Thomas Aquinas and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) who believed that religion and rationalism were simply two ways of arriving at the same truth. Religion was never meant to stand against science, according to Spinoza, it was meant to provide moral education to those who lacked a philosophical mind.²⁸

²⁷ Examples of the diversity of religious perspectives towards science are listed below.

²⁸ "I also perceived that the prophets taught only very simple things which could be easily understood by everyone, and had elaborated them with the kind of style and supported them with the sort of reasons that might most effectively sway the people's mind towards God. In this way, I became completely convinced that Scripture leaves reason absolutely free and has nothing at all in common with philosophy, but that each of them stands on its own separate footing" (Spinoza 2007, 9). John Locke also saw the 'truth' of revelation as existing in a separate realm from that of reason and believed it was important to "lay down the measures and boundaries between faith and reason: the want whereof, may possibly have been the cause, if not of great disorders, yet at least of great disputes, and perhaps mistakes in the world" (Locke 1996, 323). The distinction between faith and reason mirrors Locke's division of state and church, which I take up in the fourth chapter.

Spinoza's God is the one that Dawkins notes Einstein believes in. Still, Dawkins maintains that what he calls 'Einsteinian religion', is 'lightyears' away from what he calls 'superstitious religion', which is the religion of ordinary speech. He believes that "[p]antheism is sexed up atheism" (Dawkins 2006, 18) but this could be said to equally imply that 'atheism is watered down pantheism'. The argument becomes chiefly about semantics, as one need not call all of existence 'God', nor need 'God' be understood as being separate from all of existence. However, if the dispute of the New Atheists is scientific, rather than ideological, then they should be fine with attempts by religious believers to adapt their beliefs to scientific evidence. To the extent that religious people are able to do this, it demonstrates that what is important to them about religion is not its supernatural content. In the *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza devotes considerable time towards developing a new hermeneutics for reading the Bible.²⁹ He aimed to show that with a proper interpretation of the Bible, miracles and prophecy could be divested of their supernatural content, while retaining their social and political significance. Hobbes devotes a similar amount of attention to proper Biblical interpretation in *Leviathan*, as he hoped to reconcile belief in Christianity with his naturalistic view of the world.³⁰

²⁹ Spinoza sets out the plan for his work in the preface: "I resolved in all seriousness to make a fresh examination of Scripture with a free and unprejudiced mind, and to assert nothing about it, and accept nothing as its teaching, which I did not quite clearly derive from it. With this proviso in mind, I devised a method of interpreting the sacred volumes" (Spinoza 2007, 9). Using this method of interpretation he "inquired whether miracles have occurred contrary to the order of nature and whether they show the existence and providence of God more surely and clearly than things which we understand clearly and distinctly through their own first causes" (ibid.). Finally, he concludes "that the object of revealed knowledge is simply obedience. It is therefore entirely distinct from natural knowledge both in its object and in its principles and methods, and has nothing whatever in common with it. Each of them [i.e. faith and natural knowledge] has its own province; they do not conflict with each other; and neither should be subordinate to the other" (10).

³⁰ Hobbes devotes nearly half of *Leviathan* to interpretations of Scripture to show that there is no contradiction between what the Bible teaches and his own theories of Natural Law. "But in that I am next to handle, which is the Nature and Rights of a Christian Common-Wealth, whereof there dependeth much upon Supernaturall Revelations of the Will of God; the ground of my Discourse must be, not only the Naturall Word of God, but also the Propheticall. Nevertheless, we are not to renounce our Senses, and Experience; nor (that which is the undoubted Word of God) our natural Reason" (Hobbes 1985, 409). I'll examine Hobbes in greater detail in the next chapter.

While the New Atheists might be correct that their narrow definition of religion is focused on its superstitious content, and therefore doesn't include philosophically robust interpretations of religion that reconcile it with scientific knowledge, they fail to appreciate the ways in which religious adherents are able to maintain the moral and social features of religious belief, while abandoning some of its more troubling metaphysical claims. If the New Atheists insist on distinguishing between religion narrowly understood as superstition and religion understood so as to include philosophically justified interpretations of religious teachings so that they are consistent with current scientific knowledge, then they are making a distinction that maps onto nothing more than their own ideas. The same churches, temples, mosques, etc. will be full of each kind of people, and to distinguish them in this way is to draw an artificial line through religious practice. Convincing religious believers that scientific beliefs such as evolution and the Big Bang can be adopted without sacrificing all of their deeply held religious beliefs – as the examples of Hobbes and Spinoza show – involves the difficult work of critically examining religious texts and beliefs and adopting a more conciliatory approach than simple refutation.

1.2b NOMA: Religion as moral practices that do not overlap with science

A similar approach to resolving the conflicts between religious faith and scientific discovery is known as 'non-overlapping magisteria' (NOMA), a theory developed by Stephen Jay Gould. He maintains that "science tries to record and explain the factual character of the natural world, whereas religion struggles with spiritual and ethical questions about the meaning and proper conduct of our lives" (Gould 2011). The facts of nature, Gould argues, simply cannot dictate correct moral behavior or spiritual meaning. Pascal and Kant each thought very similar

things about religion, its importance lay in how it guided action, not whether it was verifiable.³¹

On this reading, there is no conflict between science and religion because they are trying to answer different sorts of questions. Dawkins states that the problem with such arguments is that they hide a 'supernatural agent' behind an understanding of religion that confines its claims about the universe to ethical questions, which themselves seem to rely on the same flawed epistemology that leads religion to make its cosmological claims (Dawkins, 54-66). Furthermore, if religious people think that NOMA is true, then creationists ought to stay out of scientific debates; in fact, there should be no creationists at all. The fact that there are creationists shows that some religious people understand their beliefs as being exclusive to scientific theories.

The New Atheists are understandably frustrated by the debates going on over creationism vs. science that unfold in the United States. They are right to champion the empirically verifiable basis of evolutionary theory and the big bang against pseudo-scientific notions of 'creationism' and 'intelligent design', which begin from supernatural religious notions and then attempt to justify themselves. Nonetheless, the 'culture wars' between science and religion seem quite overblown. Bellah weighs in helpfully in the debate over NOMA as a way of understanding the relationship between science and religion. First, he notes that science has only developed a cosmological view separate from that of religion very recently and that religion was actually one

³¹ Pascal thought that natural science would never be enough to affirm or deny God's existence. However, he did believe that the worldly effects of religion were evidence that religious belief was superior to atheism. He believed the moral effect of religious belief was to make people "faithful, honest, humble, grateful, generous, a sincere friend, truthful. Certainly you will not have those poisonous pleasures, glory and luxury, but will you not have others? I will tell you that you will thereby gain in this life, and that, at each step you take on this road, you will see so great a certainty of gain, so much nothingness in what you risk, that you will at last recognize that you have wagered something for certain and infinite, for which you have given nothing" (B. Pascal 2016, 68). Similarly for Kant, God is more important as a practical postulate related to moral action than as a being of ontological importance. "Thus the moral law, by means of the concept of the highest good as the object of a pure practical reason, determines the concept of the original being as the *supreme being*, something that the physical (and, pursued higher, the metaphysical) and so the whole speculative course of reason could not effect. The concept of God, then, is one belonging originally not to physics, that is, to speculative reason, but to morals...." (Kant 1997, 116).

of the driving forces behind science in classical Greece as well as ancient China, and for much of history besides. He turns to Pascal as an example of religion and science working in tandem, who said “Faith certainly tells us what the senses do not, but not the contrary of what they see; it is above, not against them” (Bellah 2011, 109). Bellah endorses the idea that different forms of knowledge can come from different cultural spheres, but argues that “contrary to Gould's argument about non-overlapping magisteria, we should note how much [science and religion] not only overlap but participate in each other” (Bellah 2011, 114). While it may be possible (and sometimes even helpful) to conceptually distinguish between religion's moral content and its metaphysical content, the ways in which religious belief is practiced (predominantly by people who are neither scientists nor ethicists) tends to complicate the relationship between the two. Thus, while Gould may be correct that we can distinguish between the ethical and the metaphysical claims of religion and science respectively, we cannot separate them – especially as they are used in common parlance by religious believers. But it is precisely the complexity of the relationship between a particular religious believer's faith in religion and their belief in science which disrupts the logical framework of: ‘belief in the supernatural’ -> ‘refusal to believe in empirical evidence’ which is at the core of the New Atheist critique of religion.

Religious believers do not all adhere to a common metaphysical framework. A Pew research poll shows that not all Christians in America believe in a literal creation story, only about half of them do (Lugo 2008). In the US believers are equally likely to believe that their holy book is the literal word of God (33%), is the word of God but is not meant to be taken literally (27%), or that holy books are not the word of God (28%). A majority of Catholics (58%) think that evolution is “the best explanation for human life on earth”. American Hindus are more likely to believe in evolution than Catholics (80%), yet that doesn't mean they are less

superstitious (they're more likely to report experiences of faith healing). If religions are fundamentally about metaphysics, they seem to have done a bad job of maintaining a common set of beliefs amongst their adherents (with some denominational exceptions such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Evangelical Christians). Yet many of the New Atheists see this as proof that religious people have failed to critically examine precisely what it is they believe, rather than the possibility that the core of religion is about social and political practice, rather than metaphysical claims about the universe.

The whole-hearted rejection of both NOMA and pantheism by the New Atheists is one of the things that made me first start to wonder whether they were correct in their approach to understanding what religion is. They could have endorsed NOMA, and used that as a platform to say that science had nothing to say about religious morality and religion had nothing to say about science – this might have helped their position in the debates over the teaching of evolution in schools. Science won over those who believed the earth was at the center of the universe, it will win over the anti-evolutionists as well – but, as with the Earth being round, this is unlikely to deal a death blow to religion. The New Atheists also could have engaged in a project to improve religious epistemology, rather than refute it, so that religions might continue to reform themselves according to more scientific principles – in the tradition of Hobbes and Spinoza. More important than that, the way in which they have gone about refuting religion have struck many as dogmatic. Dawkins seems to maintain, following Steve Weinberg, that “without [religion] you'd have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, it takes religion” (Dawkins 2006, 249). This position is dogmatic in that they dismiss any good that a person might do as the result of religion, that they might not do without it. When there are religious people who cite religion as their reason for doing

something Dawkins acknowledges as positive, he ignores the role religion had in it, either by ignoring it or attributing it to other motivations. Thus he is able to criticize religion for the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan by Islamic Fundamentalists, but ignore the role that religion played in their creation in the first place. Any good that a religious person attributes to religion can be ascribed to secular reasons by the New Atheists, whereas any evil they do in the name of religion is directly linked to their religion.³²

I am not arguing that the story that the New Atheists tell about religion is in every case wrong, it is simply incomplete and narrowly focused. Metaphysical beliefs are important to many religious believers and where those beliefs contradict our best scientific models about the universe we have good reason to question our religious commitments. Nevertheless, religions are about more than the origin of the universe or rationally defensible principles and philosophers and non-philosophers alike have found value in religion beyond its metaphysical content. In the following sections, I examine the ways in which social scientists and political philosophers have approached religion. In spite of the initial plausibility of the metaphysical approach, there are a number of features of religion that it fails to capture. Ultimately, I don't believe that religion has a set essence. However, appreciating religion's social and political characteristics gives a much clearer understanding of what is driving religious conflict and why religion has become such a major topic of political debate. From this I arrive at the definition of religion that I set out in the

³² It may be that a better appreciation of the relationship between secular forces (the economy, the state, modern science, etc.) and religion might help us to find what is *actually* motivating people when, for example, televangelists tell people that God will supernaturally intervene in their lives and bring them money and health. Do these televangelists make these claims for religious reasons (i.e. they genuinely believe in the supernatural and in the correlation between donating money to them and good fortune)? Or do they make them for secular reasons (i.e. they simply hope to dupe the gullible and take their money)? It seems that the way that decisions and beliefs are actually generated do not allow for such a simple bifurcation between religious and secular motivations.

introduction, which will guide the rest of my study of the relationship between religion and secularism.

2. Religion as a Moral Community; Definition from Social Science

In contrast to the New Atheists, social scientists have focused on the social and psychological dimensions of religion more than the metaphysical positions it advances.

Émile Durkheim's early twentieth century study of religion defined it as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions – beliefs and practices that unite its adherents in a single moral community called a church" (Durkheim 2001, 46). There are a number of compelling features in this definition as well. First, it places emphasis on the communal nature of religion. A religion, under this definition, is not a private belief. It is a communal belief that exists in order to 'unite its adherents'. Furthermore, the basis of their unification is the common moral community. This contrasts the 'religious community' with the 'political community', which is united through sovereign power in liberal political theory. This definition helps to explain why we end up with so many disputes over religion in modern-pluralist societies, since we are united into certain types of political communities (states) with different 'moral communities' (churches).

It seems impossible to properly address contemporary religious issues and not note the organizational role religion continues to play in our communities. Durkheim's definition is not antithetical to the metaphysical conception of religion. In fact, the communal element helps to explain why religious metaphysical conceptions of the universe continue to persist in spite of scientific alternatives – religious belief is reinforced in its adherents by their communities. Other types of belief, like science, find little of the same uptake. Pseudo-sciences such as phrenology or belief in the existence of an 'aether', for example, have not been able to maintain the same sort

of persistence when science presents evidence against them. This is because their content is confined to scientific propositions, as opposed to religious propositions that have social, as well as natural foundations. The New Atheists don't deny the social dimension of religion. The difference between their view of religion and Durkheim's is that their theory of religion starts with individual beliefs and then looks at their social effects. Durkheim sees the social importance of religion as being prior to its individual practice and belief.

In addition to the communal element, Durkheim's definition draws on the concept of the 'sacred'. In many ways, religion can better be understood in terms of what people consider 'sacred' rather than 'supernatural'. First, it still has a metaphysical dimension to it – but not one that is necessarily identifiable or definable. This is owing to the fact that the sacred is more elastic a concept than the supernatural and focuses on the social importance of a thing, rather than its 'objective' features. Sacred things are not limited to their metaphysical content, however, and are best understood as being particularly valuable to a particular community. It may be that the metaphysical dimension of 'the sacred' is false, but that does not invalidate the communal importance that it has.³³ All societies, even the most secular and 'rational' make value judgements that place certain goods above others. Moreover, atheists are willing to admit that they hold things sacred. Dennett states that "I have sacred values – in the sense that I feel vaguely guilty even thinking about them whether they are defensible and would never consider abandoning them (I like to think!) in the course of solving a moral dilemma" (Dennett 2006,

³³ For example, a Danish newspaper's depiction of the Prophet Muhammad offended many Muslims in the West. The reaction to this was popularly depicted in the West as Muslims trying to enforce their beliefs about blasphemy on the West. Saba Mahmood compellingly argues that in fact, many in the Muslim world understood such depictions in terms of 'moral injury' rather than 'blasphemy' (Mahmood 2009). One might reject the notion that we need to curb freedom of speech to prevent 'blasphemy', but maintain that we have a duty to prevent injury (in the form of offense). I take this debate up at great length in the final chapter.

23).³⁴ Nevertheless, he maintains that being a philosopher compels him to subject those beliefs to rational scrutiny, whereas some religious believers maintain that it is wrong to ever question their sacred beliefs.

Often, and rather perplexingly, the form the sacred takes posits the supernatural as prior to itself. This is not a new problem, however, as Socrates addresses it in *Euthyphro* when he asks Euthyphro what makes something holy and what makes it unholy. Euthyphro responds that when the gods love something, it is holy, and when they despise it, it is unholy. Socrates, however, convinces Euthyphro that the gods love holy things because they are holy, rather than them being holy because they are loved. A number of traits possessed by the holy emerge in the course of the discussion but each of them are cast down – it partakes in justice, service to the gods (yet the gods cannot benefit from mortal things), honoring the gods (yet this is the same as saying the holy is what is loved by the gods). At this point Euthyphro, frustrated by his inability to articulate what is holy, runs off and leaves Socrates to his trial for impiety. The only thing that is established is that the holy is connected to justice (perhaps a sub-branch of justice). The relationship between piety and justice is further fleshed out in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates develops his own myth of the afterlife (110b-114c), which connects piety and the good life and moral judgement.³⁵ Yet immediately after finishing his tale, Socrates notes that “No sensible man would insist that these things are as I have described them, but I think it is fitting for a man to risk the belief – for the risk is a noble one – that this, or something like this, is true about our souls and their dwelling places, since the soul is evidently immortal, and a man should repeat this to himself as if it were an incantation,” (Plato 1997, 114d). It is not the

³⁴ Dennett names ‘democracy, life, love and truth’ as some of the things he holds sacred.

³⁵ “When the dead arrive at the place to which each has been led by his guardian spirit, they are first judged as to whether they have led a good and pious life” (Plato 1997, 113d).

metaphysics of his account that convinces Socrates of its veracity (a metaphysics he admits is suspect), but the nobility of the belief. In contrast to the contradictory piety of Euthyphro, Socratic piety is judged by its effect on our actions. The account of the ‘noble lie’ in the *Republic* bears this out even more fully, as the founders of the just city consciously invent myths in order to unite their people and promote good behaviour.³⁶ This view of religion makes it coextensive with politics – something that has been maintained by a number of modern political philosophers.

The connection between the sacred and justice not only makes religion fundamentally political, but also makes politics fundamentally religious.³⁷ We seem able to live without the supernatural, but we cannot live in political societies without the sacred. In the fourth chapter, I will look at secular political ideologies and some of the principles and ideas that they hold to be sacred. Dennett is correct in maintaining that there is a danger in holding any symbol ‘too sacred’, but also shows more insight than the other New Atheists when he acknowledges that he also holds certain values as sacred.³⁸

There are a number of strong critiques of Durkheim’s theory. First, the definition he provides tells us a number of things about religion, but it is so broad that it includes a variety of phenomena that seem thoroughly unreligious. Sports teams, political parties, and pop-stars might

³⁶ “And consider the case of those stories we were talking about just now – those we tell because we do not know the truth about those ancient events: by making the lies that they contain as much like the truth as possible, don’t we make them useful?” (Plato 1997, 382c-d)

³⁷ This is the view that I think Spinoza is getting at in the *Theological-Political Treatise*. Since this is such a major theme of my dissertation, I want to hold off on defending this view here, as there are a number of nuances in this position that give us reason to pause when considering the relationship between politics and religion.

³⁸ Dennett says this about the ‘sacred’ character of the Statue of Liberty: “Since September 11, 2001, I have often thought that perhaps it was fortunate for the world that the attackers targeted the World Trade Center instead of the Statue of Liberty, for if they had destroyed our sacred symbol of democracy I fear that we Americans would have been unable to keep ourselves from indulging in paroxysms of revenge of a sort the world has never seen before” (Dennett 2006, 257). A more extreme ‘paroxysm of revenge’ than the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is a frightening thing to imagine indeed.

all be said to create the type of ‘collective effervescence’ that Durkheim believed united their adherents. This, I think, is a problem that every definition of religion will encounter. It will either ignore important religious phenomena, the understanding of which may be integral to understanding religion, or it will be so broad as to incorporate non-religious phenomena.³⁹ In the fourth chapter, I will look at how nationalism and the ideologies of Liberalism and Communism each resemble religion in certain ways, but note that if we extend the definition of religion so far as to include these sorts of things then religion becomes a social system that no one can do without – including the New Atheists.

Another criticism of Durkheim’s approach is that understanding religion solely in terms of how it unites a given community can cause researchers to miss the internal diversity that exists within a religious community and between religious practitioners.⁴⁰ Since his unit of analysis was the ‘primitive’ society, the internal differentiation of such societies disrupted the conceptual unity he desired in his depiction of religion. He was therefore forced to import ‘magic’ as a contrast to religion. While magic seemed to have many of the characteristics of religion (mythology, dances, rites, and sacrifices to name a few), Durkheim believed it was different because it emphasized the personal and selfish over the communal. The obvious overlap between the two notwithstanding, his definition captures the important communal aspects of religion, which are crucial to many of those who identify with a particular religious tradition – many of who hold religion to be an integral part of their identities. Nevertheless, it is important to keep

³⁹ Dennett acknowledges that this may be a problem, but doesn’t really explore what the implications of this might be. I discuss this problem in greater detail below.

⁴⁰ The practitioners themselves may believe that they have a unified set of beliefs, despite a surprising amount of internal diversity. When I was teaching in Somaliland, I was regularly surprised by the amount of conformity I found in their religious views during class discussions, relative to the diversity that I found in their written assignments. The reason for this, I believe, was a desire to present a united set of views (usually tending towards the most conservative interpretation of Islam) about their religion to a foreigner, despite the diverse forces acting on their perspectives – including their clan, mosque, relatives living abroad, and their own personal goals for the future.

the diversity of beliefs that religious adherents have in mind, lest we fall into the trap of thinking that religion only has the power to enforce communal orthodoxy and lacks the ability to provoke individual and deeply personal beliefs that conflict with those of the surrounding community.

3. Religion as a Private Psychological Experience; Definition from Psychology

In contrast to the communal definition, many understand religious belief in deeply personal terms. William James offered the very un-Durkheimian definition of religion as “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they consider divine” (James 1982, 17). This definition fixates on what has been thought of as a ‘natural capacity’ for religion that is possessed by everyone. Even some atheists have adopted this view of religion. The late Ronald Dworkin, for example, writes in *Religion without God* that “religion is deeper than God. Religion is a deep, distinct, and comprehensive worldview: it holds that inherent, objective value permeates everything, that the universe and its creatures are awe inspiring, that human life has purpose and the universe order” (R. Dworkin 2013, 1).

Dennett, who calls James one of his philosophical heroes, states that for the sake of conceptual clarity we should separate off the beliefs that people hold about the divine and the sacred independently of society and call people with such beliefs ‘spiritual’ rather than ‘religious’. He correctly notes that this “concentration on individual, private religious experience was a tactical choice for James; he thought that the creeds, rituals, trappings, and political hierarchies of “organized” religion were a distraction from the root phenomenon...” (Dennett 2006, 11). Yet Dennett himself frequently uses ‘spiritual belief’ as a synonym for ‘religious

belief' and quotes many who do the same.⁴¹ While it might make sense in some instances to separate what Dennett calls 'religion' from what he calls 'spiritual', it is inconsistent to argue that religion is essentially based on the misfiring of an evolved capacity to recognize agency, while maintaining that spirituality is something quite distinct. This seems especially strange since one of the reasons that James wanted to look at religious experience was to understand how religions were related to the "original experiences which were the pattern-setters to all this mass of suggested feeling and imitated conduct" (James 2004, 6-7). The spirituality of a Jesus or a Mohammad travelled a long road to arrive at modern Christianity and Islam, but separating their spiritual beliefs from the religions that developed out of them seems to acknowledge a religious capacity but deny that there is anything that can fulfill it.

It is little wonder that such a personalized definition was proposed by an American psychologist, given the role that denominationalism has played in American history and the importance it has been seen to have had on individual psychology. The growth of various 'spiritual movements' that define what Charles Taylor calls the 'Age of Authenticity' have caused many philosophers to examine the proliferation of private religious and spiritual beliefs (Taylor 2007). Indeed, the very nature of the Protestant Reformation thrust one's 'personal relationship with God' into centre stage as being the cornerstone of religion in the Anglo-American tradition. For some people, this has weakened religion's communal dimension to such an extent that they have abandoned organized religion and pick and choose their religious commitments like savvy consumers. One can dread one's hair, practice yoga, and wear a cross

⁴¹ For example: "As people recover from their infatuation with technology and material comforts, spiritual identity becomes a person's most valued attribute, and populations come to be ever more sharply divided among Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and a few other major multinational religious organizations" (Dennett 2006, 35). See also: "The spiritual leaders of the Pomio Kivung have been its founder, Koriām, his principal assistant, Bernard, and Koriām's successor, Kolman" (Dennett 2006, 100).

around one's neck without any necessary contradiction.⁴² Others find that such religious practices lack the thick communal bonds and the external moral guidance that they want out of religion and choose to join a more demanding religion as a result.⁴³

Religion transcends the connection between the individual and society. It is something that binds us to others in a community, but it remains something that we hold onto in our most private moments. The private capacity for religion, in contrast to its communal function, allows religions to reform their institutions and beliefs. Religious individuals are able to question what they believe and how they practice it. When religion is understood in terms of the social function it serves rather than the particular beliefs attached to it we can better appreciate the reforms made by people like Martin Luther. Substituting one unjustified belief for another is little accomplishment, but the reformation of a church and its epistemic principles has important social significance. As much as religion 'unites us into a common moral community' it can also divide even its most orthodox adherents. Arguments between adherents of the same religion (or closely related branches of it) often reach greater levels of violence than those between different religions. In the next section, I look at the distinction between 'true and false religion' and the role that interpretation plays in determining 'religious membership' and 'religious belief'.

⁴² One might argue that the mimetic, physical practices related to religion such as bowing, yoga, and other ritualized conduct is only contingently related to religious phenomena. However, there is rarely a thick boundary between practice and belief. Yoga has become politicized recently, as India's conservative Hindu Nationalist BJP party successfully lobbied the UN to make June 21st International Yoga day. Critics argue that there is an attempt to use a seemingly secular day to promote a Hindu nationalist identity in India. Furthermore, many people who begin practicing Yoga for health benefits often tout its spiritual benefits as well.

⁴³ An alternative to the tension between the public and the private functions of religion is the possibility that the nature of religion has changed as the result of modern forces. It may be that religion began as an evolved capacity designed to unite communities and then became something that someone practiced largely privately as secular forces (the state, the economy, ideology) came to occupy more and more of religion's public functions. In the third and fourth chapters, I look at some of the ways in which modern forces have impacted the nature of religion.

4. Religion as a Means of Supporting the Common Good; Religion in Political Philosophy

What does it mean when we say that there are ‘true and false’ versions of a religion?

Most of the early modern political philosophers, including Machiavelli, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke all maintained that religion was capable of such division.⁴⁴ All religions claim some truth value. Machiavelli writes of true versions of both the Roman and Christian religions – implying that the metaphysical nature of such belief was not what made a religion ‘true or false’, but rather the way in which it was practiced and the political use to which it was put. Thus, when the Romans used their religion to unite them together and act towards the common good, their religion was ‘true’, according to Machiavelli’s interpretation, whereas when religious belief was twisted for the corrupt gain of the few, it was ‘false’. The fact that he believed both the Roman religion and the Christian religion were each capable of ‘truth’ as well as deception marks the social utility of religion as more important than its particular doctrines. This approach sees the ‘truth’ of religion as only being possible with responsible interpretation. Religion maintains its place as being fundamental to both our private and public selves (i.e. in both the Durkheimian and Jamesian senses of religion), but places the burden of how to behave with this information back on us, rather than on the holy book/king/priest/tradition. The important thing to note about this approach to religion, is that metaphysics is not the defining criteria of what makes a religion ‘true’ or ‘false’ – rather it is the social use to which that religion is put.

We see a version of this approach to religion when politicians blame the ‘corrupt interpretation’ of a religion for a terrorist attack, rather than the religion itself. ‘Islam is not the

⁴⁴ I will give a much fuller account of the role that religion played in modern political philosophy in the next chapter. Machiavelli and Hobbes saw religion as a state tool to cultivate obedience and cement social bonds between citizens. Spinoza wrote the *Theological-Political Treatise* with the express purpose of demonstrating that religious faith was solely concerned with cultivating obedience and ethical behaviour. While Locke believed that ‘tolerance’ was the chief mark of the *true* Christian faith.

culprit, the culprits are those who seek to twist its message' is a common presidential refrain. Indeed, in the multi-cultural, pluralist tradition it has become popular to talk about religions all having basically the same message – do good and refrain from evil. Sam Harris believes this perspective on religion is simply another contradiction. "Every religion makes explicit claims about the way the world is, and the sheer profusion of these incompatible claims creates an enduring basis for conflict" (Harris 2005). His argument is that, since religions propose such strong beliefs, which are not based on universally accepted views, we cannot arrive at a common notion of the truth. Since we lack such a common notion, the behaviour of some will seem unjustifiable to others who are behaving according to a different religious belief and there will be conflict over this. The irreconcilability of deeply held beliefs means that religions will always be a source of conflict, according to Harris. This has the ring of truth to it, but most people (at least in the US) disagree. Seventy percent of Americans with a religious affiliation believe that "many other religions can lead to eternal life" (Lugo 2008). To Harris, this is merely another sign that religious people believe contradictory things, yet if they're capable of such contradiction – why does he also cite such differences as a leading cause of conflict in the world? If, however, religion is understood as a social system that promotes good living, then it makes sense that different social systems designed to promote social cohesion would be equally valuable – but only insofar as they promote such a good. Religion can be something that we have respect for, but it is not immune to critique. Not all religious beliefs are created equal.

An upside to this approach is that it provides people with a vocabulary and conceptual resources to get over seemingly superficial differences between the faiths. If the purpose of faith is to unite us (in the Durkheimian sense), then this purpose should persist even between peoples of different faiths. This is the idea behind John Rawls' notion of 'overlapping consensus' which

he develops in *Political Liberalism*. An overlapping consensus seeks to present a conception of justice that is, as far as possible, “independent of any comprehensive religious, philosophical, or moral doctrines” (Rawls 2005, 144). “The crucial fact”, he states, “is not the fact of pluralism as such, but of reasonable pluralism” (ibid.) The history of religious pluralism in America (despite it being quite Christian in origin), arguably kept the country from treating their Muslim population much worse than they did following the 9/11 attacks.⁴⁵ No one wants to be held responsible for the actions or interpretations of all members of their moral community, atheists included. Dawkins is outraged at the suggestion that the atrocities in Stalinist Russia or in China during the Cultural Revolution had anything to do with the imposition of state atheism.

Unlike other public identity features (citizenship, profession, ethnicity, family), religion seems particularly susceptible to different interpretations of membership. One Christian might maintain that the beliefs, practices, and attitudes of another person claiming to be Christian are insufficient to make them one. Or, they might acknowledge that they are Christian, in an identitarian sense, but deny that they are in a ‘real’ (principled) sense. I recently saw a standup comedy show called ‘The Muslims are Coming’ put together by a number of Muslim-American comics who were doing a cross-country tour to break down stereotypes about their religion. In it, one member of the troupe says that, while he had respect for her, he did not consider a fellow performer to be a ‘real’ Muslim because she told jokes about sleeping with different men outside of marriage and other taboo subjects. Her attitude was that her religious identity was one that she chose to adopt due to a variety of factors, including her own family’s religiousness and racists

⁴⁵ If Islam were a political ideology like Communism, rather than a religion like Christianity, it might even have been outlawed. The very freedom of religious practice used by the Christian-right to keep evolution out of schools was used (to their consternation) to allow a controversial mosque’s construction in downtown New York. Martha Nussbaum (2011) lauds this tradition of pluralism in her book *The New Religious Intolerance*, but wishes that it went deeper than it does. In the fourth chapter I’ll discuss some of the similarities (and important differences) between religion and ideology.

who constantly associated her with Islam because of her ethnicity. Would we say that she is somehow wrong about her religious identity? Such an approach appears mistaken in a number of ways. First, the conditions of religious pluralism that have resulted in increasingly privatized religion have altered the threshold of what it means to be a member of a religious community. For Locke, one of the virtues of churches is that they are voluntary associations, whereas states impose strict guidelines for membership.⁴⁶ However, Locke notes that as voluntary associations, churches have the ability to cast out members if they are not adhering to the doctrinal code.⁴⁷ Religious membership often depends on other members of the same religious group accepting you as a participant in their faith.

In addition to the perspective that there are principles and ways of living that are more in line with a religious tradition than others is the notion of thick and thin religions developed by Sudipta Kaviraj.⁴⁸ Kaviraj gives the example of his grandfather, who would not consider Hindus of other sects to practice the same religion as him.

To him, the most serious value of religion was in determining social conduct and ethical problems, not in political life. It is because of the vast range of issues that religion covered in his mind that I call his religion thick: to state it differently, if he was asked who practiced the same religion as his own, he would have laid down a long list of criteria – starting from metaphysical beliefs to ritual observances – and claimed that only someone who satisfied *all* these criteria of religious sameness practiced the same religion. (Kaviraj 2010, 346).

⁴⁶ “Let us now consider what a church is. A church, then, I take to be a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord in order to the public worshipping of God in such manner as they judge acceptable to Him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls” (Locke 1689, 9).

⁴⁷ Locke maintains that the Church’s laws cannot be enforced with force, but rather ought to use “exhortations, admonitions, and advices. If by these means the offenders will not be reclaimed, and the erroneous convinced, there remains nothing further to be done but that such stubborn and obstinate persons, who give no ground to hope for their reformation, should be cast out and separated from the society. This is the last and utmost force of ecclesiastical authority” (Locke 1689, 11).

⁴⁸ Kaviraj understands ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ religion in terms that are meant to specifically apply to India, but I think much of his argument applies to the concept of religion in general.

Thick religions, Kaviraj notes, have trouble mobilizing large scale support in democratic societies because there is an inverse relationship between thickness of religion and community size. Furthermore, the diversity of thick religious beliefs in India make many who practice thick forms of religion distrust the use to which the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have put religion in their religiously nationalist project.

The religion that attracts contemporary Hindu nationalists is the exact opposite of this thick religion, and its functions and purposes are correspondingly different. Schematically, the religion of Hindu nationalists is thin, because it is entirely indifferent to the sectarian practices of everyday worship; indeed, its primary purpose is to make them redundant. The criteria it uses for inclusion of groups into a vast, *loosely defined* Hindu religion, consequently, are sketchy and few (Kaviraj 2010, 348).

The New Atheists, under the guise of conceptual clarity, want to count many people who do not consider themselves as atheists among their ranks. Dawkins, for example, says that everyone is an atheist in regards to some beliefs, he just goes one step further and disbelieves in all gods. He also notes that agnostics are technically atheists, since they don't believe in any particular notion of God. Dennett says:

If what you hold sacred is not any kind of Person you could pray to, or consider to be an appropriate recipient of gratitude (or anger, when a loved one is senselessly killed), you're an atheist in my book. If, for reasons of loyalty to tradition, diplomacy, or self-protective camouflage (very important today, especially for politicians), you want to deny what you are, that's your business, but don't kid yourself (Dennett 2006, 245).

Why is the social content of religion not what religion 'actually' is? A certain loyalty to tradition is what attaches many of us secularists to religious traditions. Being ethnically Jewish or Muslim is often enough to provoke anti-Semitism or Islamophobia, regardless of a person's individual beliefs. When religious conflicts take place, secular members of each religion often get involved. The former Yugoslavia fought a number of wars in which the adherents were divided along religious lines (Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim), but a number of the politicians and generals were quite secular in their beliefs. 'Tradition, diplomacy, or protective camouflage'

– not to mention family or ethnic association – can become reason enough for participation in modern religious conflicts.

5. Religion as a Form of Ethnic Nationalism⁴⁹

Religion has become one of the major grounds of ethnic conflict. When we discuss contemporary religious conflicts political disagreements are vastly more important than metaphysical disagreements. The Sunni-Shia split in Islam, which has claimed more lives than any other religious conflict in the last three decades, was the result of who should lead the Muslim community after the death of the Prophet Mohammad. The continued differences are over issues of ritual, religious organization, law, and interpretation. Similarly, the split between Protestants and Catholics was sparked by Martin Luther's critique of the Pope's ability to issue indulgences. There is very little about metaphysics, with the exception of what the priest's and the Pope's "powers" were. Such "powers", while having a limited amount of metaphysical content, were understood largely in terms of authority.

The point of conflict in religious disputes is often hard to pin down. Religious authority is so often premised on metaphysical claims (though not always) that it is hard to disconnect the claims to authority from the metaphysics of that belief. There are some conflicts that are driven more by metaphysical differences than politics (e.g. disagreements over when life begins drive the abortion debate). Yet it would be unwise to causally reduce all religious conflicts to conflicts over metaphysics. Such an approach leads either to the position that reconciliation is impossible

⁴⁹ At first blush, this might seem to be simply a reiteration of the way Durkheim understands religion in communal terms. The difference, however, is that 'ethnic nationalism' is a fundamentally modern phenomenon. While Durkheim focused on communities, he understood them in relatively homogeneous terms and understood the communities they formed as being somewhat stable. This section focuses on the mobilization of religion for political purposes that relate to the modern nation-state. This will be taken up at greater length in chapter four. Here I look at how political disagreements can create new religions that have the same metaphysical basis but different political structures and at how religions expand and change in reaction to secular-national politics.

(e.g. ‘Catholics and Protestants will never get along’) or that one side or the other will have to abandon their position for a reconciliation to take place. Yet religions do compromise with one another. Other conflicts, such as the Western Schism when three Popes were crowned, seem to have no metaphysical content whatsoever and to be purely political – despite the metaphysical role the Pope’s authority played. Recognizing the ways in which religious conflicts are conditioned by political forces can help us to negotiate compromises between different religious groups, whereas metaphysical oversimplification can only serve to more deeply entrench both sides.

Understanding the contemporary politics of religion is essential for understanding religious belief and interpretation. Religions do not simply change randomly, but rather seem to follow somewhat predictable political patterns. It is hard to ignore the role that the war in Iraq played in the rise of ISIS, as Jeb Bush had repeatedly pointed out to him while on the campaign trail. The alienation and disenfranchisement of the Sunni population of Iraq by the Shia government of Nouri al-Maliki led many Sunni groups to seek employment, alliances, and political representation through ISIS rather than the central government of Iraq. Furthermore, ISIS regularly conscripts young male recruits against their will – meaning it is possible to be a member of ISIS despite a lack of belief in it. The New Atheists want to focus on the sort of beliefs that give rise to extremist groups like ISIS, while ignoring the political conditions that gave rise to the organization in the first place. While God is frequently referenced by militant religious groups as a justification for violence, the motivating reasons that religious militants reference are often framed in political (rather than metaphysical) terms. Al Qaida referenced the occupation of Muslim Afghanistan as the reason for their attacks on the Soviet Union in the 1980s. They then referenced the subservience of the Saudi government to the United States and

the placement of military bases on ‘sacred land’ as the reason for the 9/11 attacks. Israelis and Palestinians each reference previous and ongoing wrongs committed by the other side, frequently framing their anger at the other side in terms of ‘a nation’s right to defend itself’ or ‘the violation of international law’ – highly secular concepts based on philosophical traditions. Metaphysical belief is but a small part of contemporary religious conflict and its primary function is to delimit the sides.

Mark Jurgensmeyer’s book *The New Cold War?: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* was one of the first works to recognize the way that global politics were being reorganized around religion in the wake of the Cold War.

It has become increasingly clear that religious nationalists are more than just religious fanatics: they are political activists seriously attempting to reformulate the modern language of politics and provide a new basis for the nation-state. In many cases they are waging populist struggles against Western culture and its political ideology, and they aim at infusing public life with indigenous cultural symbols and moral value (Jurgensmeyer 1993, xiii).

Ironically, the criticism of religion seems to have been coopted by conservative groups that also endorse Christianity because there has been an alliance between Christians and secularists in many Western states when it comes to Islam. Calls to depose democratically elected governments in Muslim countries, or to restrict Muslim immigration, or make wearing the hijab illegal have been advanced by conservatives like Marie Le Pen, who combine Christian civilizational ambitions with secular sensibilities to amalgamate electoral support. Being ‘anti-religious’ allowed atheists in America to criticize the ‘Christianity’ of Bush, while still ‘supporting the troops’ in the War in Iraq. Part of the reason the New Atheists seem to have garnered such popularity recently is that there has been an increasing interest in non-religious critiques of Islam. Non-religious critiques of Islam, unlike Christian critiques, often portray themselves as objective and neutral.

Religion is a powerful mobilising tool for oppressed peoples, who often lack access to the secular institutions of the university, the economy, or the state. Jurgensmeyer's studies of religion in South Asia have shown that the lower class of 'Untouchables' modified their political strategies on the basis of the political environment around them (Jurgensmeyer 1982). Since they perceived their context to be increasingly religious and Hindu, adherents felt that political opposition should take a religious form as well.⁵⁰ Western-secular societies are also not immune from finding opposition to them take a religious form. The Nation of Islam is an American example of how opposition to racist policies in the United States took a religious form. Furthermore, Malcolm X's own personal religious transformation when he visited Mecca and saw Muslims of all different races praying together lends credence to the notion that religious content (in this case Islamic universalism) is important, rather than standing as a mere symbol for otherwise secular national identities.

Religious conflict, especially in the contemporary world, has such overlap with ethnicity and nationalism that such categories seem better at explaining religious phenomena than metaphysical belief. It might be that people believe what they do because they have become religious, rather than becoming religious because they have come to believe certain things. This would explain the often non-religious circumstances that surround conversions – approaching death, the death of a loved one, the breaking up of one's marriage, financial ruin, finding alternative ethical communities that validate and support one, or resisting state oppression. All of these might convert a person to a religion or cause them to abandon religion altogether. There is

⁵⁰ We see similar forces at place in Muslim countries with secular dictatorships. Since the oppressive apparatus of the state has adopted an anti-religious message – opposition to the state is expressed in increasingly religious terms. Alaa al Aswany paints a tragic picture of how this can happen in his widely celebrated novel *The Yacoubian Building*. When one of the main characters, Taha el Shazli, attempts to join the police force (in part to afford to marry), he is turned away by military bureaucrats because of his father's lowly profession as a doorman. This eventually leads him to join an Islamist militant organization.

definitely a change of belief that takes place (that's what separates philosophical Christians from religious ones), but belief is sometimes a performative act.⁵¹ Similar to nationalist beliefs such as 'America is great' or ideological ones such as 'the invisible hand of the market', religious beliefs are better understood in social, rather than metaphysical terms.

6. Human Kinds and Problems with Definitions

I've presented seven different approaches to the concept of religion:

- (1) Religion as a metaphysical view of the universe.
- (1.2a) Religion as parallel to science.
- (1.2b) Religion as moral practices that do not overlap with science.
- (2) Religion as a moral community.
- (3) Religion as a private psychological experience.
- (4) Religion as a means of supporting the common good.
- (5) Religion as a form of ethnic-nationalism.

None of these approaches seem to capture religious phenomena in their entirety. Some of them are too broad and some of them focus on only very narrow phenomena that fail to capture the complexity of religion and the different ways in which adherents participate in it. Here I want to note some of the problems that any definition of religion will have, as a result of religion being a human, rather than a natural kind.

Hent de Vries, in his introduction to *Religion: Beyond a Concept* (2008) draws on Wittgenstein's notion of 'family resemblances' to explain how religion draws on forms of

⁵¹ I remember remarking on the calloused mark that many Egyptian men have on their foreheads and was told that it was from praying so frequently that the prayer rug rubbed the skin on their forehead into a callous. I was later told that many men actually rub their foreheads vigorously against the prayer rug because the callous had become quite fashionable. It had become the 'American flag lapel pin' of religious devotion.

‘language games’ that are rooted in the forms of life that are necessary products of the type of social beings that we are. Studies on religion ought to take stock of the diversity of practices, dispositions, and institutional structures that form religious experience. If we enter into a study of religion with overly robust preconceptions, we may see unity where there is in fact diversity and incommensurable divides where there is in fact room for compromise. Religion, as a concept, might best be understood as an umbrella category that contains a certain family of ideas that cannot be properly represented in universal terms. However, against this strain, de Vries also notes that since “reference to some ‘universal’ remains unavoidable (as is the seeking out of some particulars) – the Wittgensteinian notion of ‘family resemblances’ may not be emphatic enough or expansive enough for our needs” (de Vries 2008, 18). For some people struggling with their religious beliefs in the modern world, the privatization of religion has reached a point where religion is no longer providing the communal resources it once did. Without the development of alternative notions of community – such as those provided by national consciousness (or class consciousness for that matter) – the return to conservative religious movements might be the result of a desire to strengthen communal bonds with stricter communal rules. The particular traits of religions seem to avoid being captured by a definition and yet the universals that seem so indissociable from the practice and discussion of religion by adherents seem to demand that universal notions be given a proper examination.

Some of the problems we have defining religion can be better understood when we look at the difference between human and natural kinds. Dennett notes that religion is not a ‘natural kind’ and that it would be fruitless to come up with a definition that admits of no counterexamples as a result (Dennett 2006). Muhammad Ali Khalidi notes that, despite some arguments against the existence of a distinction between human and natural kinds, generally

scholars think of human kinds being different from natural kinds for four reasons: 1) the existence of human kinds is dependent on human minds; 2) human kinds (unlike natural kinds) are subject to a looping effect, such that knowing about them influences how people interact with them; 3) human kinds are (often) ontologically subjective and depend on human attitudes towards them for their existence; and (4) human kinds are often normative and contain value judgements about them (Khalidi 2013).⁵² The characteristics exhibited by human kinds make them much more political than natural kinds and also much more likely to cause disputes. The way we define religion ought to be sensitive to these considerations.

Law is one area where a definition of religion is particularly necessary, given that so many constitutions make reference to religion and protect religious observance. There are a number of ongoing legal arguments over the definition of religion right now. In 2013, the UK's Supreme Court ruled that Scientology was a religion (Jones 2013). Courts had refused to recognize it as such since the 1970s on the grounds that they didn't worship a God or gods, which was found to be an example of religious discrimination in the more recent ruling. In Canada, there has been a dispute over the religious status of the 'Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster'.⁵³ An ordained minister of the Church was denied a driver's licence in BC because he asked to wear a colander on his head as part of his religious beliefs (Elliott 2014). In the United States, Pastafarians (members of this 'church') are allowed to have their license photographs taken with a colander on their heads (Criss 2017). The protections accorded to religion in many

⁵² One might dispute the distinction between human and natural kinds on the basis that natural kinds might also be said to depend on human minds. While scientific propositions might also be taken to depend on human minds, the goal of the scientific method is always to have the same experiment reproduce the same results – regardless of the person who performs it. As I've shown above, even the definition of religion and membership in a religion seems subject to interpretation.

⁵³ The Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster was a sort of 'mock religion' that was invented in 2005 to demonstrate the arbitrary character of creationists' belief that 'you can't prove God didn't create the universe.'

countries mean that there are incentives to become religious (tax breaks being an important one). Furthermore, Canada's recent policy of fast-tracking 'religious minorities' through the refugee process shows how religious designations can sometimes mean the difference between life and death (Levitz 2016).⁵⁴ I've given a number of instances where a certain definition of religion conflicts with other definitions that seem equally valuable. If we say that someone is 'Christian' in an identitarian sense, that doesn't necessarily mean they agree with any particular interpretation of metaphysics. Nor do similar beliefs about metaphysics mean that people will adopt similar ethical principles. As with gender and race, two paradigmatic human kinds, religious people adopt all sorts of orientations and attitudes to their religious practices. They also have all sorts of orientations and attitudes projected onto them, often unfairly. Arab men and women often experience religious discrimination, regardless of their religious beliefs, on the basis of their race. This is another reason that understanding religion in what I've called an 'identitarian' sense is a helpful approach in considering how to approach religion when it intersects with issues of politics and law.

One thing the different approaches to religion that I've outlined above shows, is that whoever examines religious phenomena tends to see something about themselves in its various manifestations. Dawkins, an evolutionary biologist, sees religion as doing the same thing as science – just badly. Durkheim, a sociologist studying different peoples, sees the communal dimension of religion as its most important feature. James, a psychologist, chooses to focus on the psychological effect that religion has on the mind of its adherents. Hobbes, a political philosopher, is most interested in how religion relates to sovereign political powers and questions

⁵⁴ This might seem like a very particular instance of when your religion might have an impact on your ability to access goods from a secular country. Yet church groups remain some of the major sponsors of refugees, giving some (often Christians) an advantage over others when fleeing violence.

of unity and obedience. Jurgensmeyer, an anthropologist, associates religion with rising nationalist movements that he observed in south-Asia. Religion takes part in all of these different spheres of life and there is nothing inherently wrong with any of these approaches. In addition to religion admitting to different definitions, it is also subject to the looping effect. The way that religion intersects with social forces like race, class, and the state mean that its essence and practice are always undergoing change, just as they change individuals who identify as practitioners. Part of understanding the diverse ways that religion operates in contemporary, global society will involve an investigation of how religion took on the characteristics it has.

Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* sees the transition between the (religious) fifteenth century and the (secular) twenty-first century as a transition between different social imaginaries. Part of the reason for the length of the work was that the social imaginary that made it necessary to believe in Christianity in Europe in 1500 AD underwent a myriad of micro-changes to bring us to a world in which religion is seen as unnecessary, and sometimes even as a burden to participation in the modern social order. One of the important features of his argument is that the way we understand being religious in the contemporary context is not the way people understood being religious in medieval Europe. The very nature of religion has changed. The complex ways that it has changed its nature based on doctrine (there is or isn't a God or gods), practice (there is or isn't a set of rituals that are key to practice), membership (constructed ethnically, culturally, or based on belief), and secular circumstances (whether the religion is suppressed or adopted by the government), seem to all support the notion that religion is part of a social imaginary.

When we approach religion as part of a social imaginary, we do not deny any of the above approaches to religion. The New Atheists, whom I've used as a foil for much of this examination of the nature of religion, are in part correct. Religion does have metaphysical

content that inspires some of its users to deny current scientific theories. But they overstate the case that this is a core feature of religion. As a social imaginary, there is a sort of ‘slippage’ between the different approaches to religion. Sometimes criticism of religious metaphysics crosses over into discriminatory criticism about people who look or dress differently. The looping effect that is a characteristic of human kinds make all the different ways that we talk about religion relevant to its political manifestations. A better understanding of religion’s political importance will therefore demand an understanding of how social imaginaries work and how secular social imaginaries have framed debates surrounding contemporary religious conflict.

7. A Social and Political Approach to Religion

A few things shine through from the definitions that have been given. Religion is a social system that plays a major role in peoples’ private and public beliefs. It is capable of rationalization and critical reformation, but its day to day practice tends to consist more often in the uncritical acceptance of social mores. It both unifies and divides people. It is associated with quiet, meditative contemplation as well as passionate, emotional expression. Its practice is sometimes more important than its belief. Its nature changes depending on what we say about it (e.g. constitutional protections incentivize religious designations). Finally, like many other private social systems (e.g. gender and the economy) religion is political.

Religion brings people together for celebrations, rituals, community building, social welfare projects and a whole host of other reasons. Religious communities can create very ‘thick’ beliefs that attempt to cut those communities off from ‘less religious’ outsiders and that reinforce strict codes of behaviour. Religious communities might also understand their religious identity in very ‘thin’ terms, so that the President of the United States can make a religious speech full of references to God that seeks to foster a wider sense of community (including Jews

and ‘philosophical Christians’) at the expense of a ‘thicker’ conception of religious membership.⁵⁵ Many people have begun to turn to the internet to seek religious stimulation. The internet’s ability to present itself as highly personalized, while also bringing together enormous numbers of people has made it an important forum for religious discussion and recruitment. Sometimes, people turn away from their local religious community and towards online communities, as outlined in a recent Canadian study on why many Muslims used the internet to maintain connections of faith.⁵⁶

Religion provides powerful imaginative resources that help us frame contemporary social issues in new ways. The alliances and conflicts between religions are not arbitrary. People of all religions and of no religions are capable of working together. Muslims and Christians work against secular sexual education reform in Ontario. Christians and secularists work against Muslims being allowed to wear the veil during citizenship oaths. Secularists and Muslims work together in repealing such legislation. Peoples of all religions work together to tackle the Syrian refugee crisis. Religion, like race, gender, and class, intersects with peoples’ lives in a variety of different ways. It brings out both good and bad in people and the power that it holds over

⁵⁵ It might be tempting to consider such speeches as ‘not really’ religious, given that it is not a robust conception of God or religion that is referenced but rather a ‘secularized’ understanding of it. As I’ll show more fully in the chapter on the rise of the secular state – religion was considered a key tool in the construction of national identities. There is a reason that public figures draw on religious symbols and metaphors when rallying support for a conflict (as with George W. Bush’s references to God and Crusades when embarking on the War on Terror) and also when they seek reconciliation (as with Martin Luther King Jr.). Secular politics require a certain amount of ‘collective effervescence’ in order to create shared senses of intentionality to accomplish large-scale projects. Prohibition was framed in heavily religious terms, while the ‘War on Drugs’ was not, despite being such a similar social phenomenon.

⁵⁶ Rubina Ramji gives the following conclusion: “Although they are individually searching for their own ways of being a good/‘real’ Muslim, they also embody the ideal image of a member of a global ummah, connected to other Muslims throughout the world. They espouse ‘authentic’ or ‘real’ Islam by venturing away from familial and cultural interpretations of the faith, while at the same time displaying their diversity in the way they choose authoritative voices in Islam. They define ‘Islam’ independently and follow it devoutly, globally, online” (Ramji 2014, 117)

peoples' dispositions and beliefs can be used in either way. I take up the ways in which religion has maintained its social importance in the final chapter.

It is the dynamic interplay between these different features of religion that make it such a political force in the world and it is religion's political importance that most interests me. A political conception of religion tells us much more about the most pressing religious issues that confront us today than an approach that is primarily metaphysical can. Religion can also tell us something about secular political conflicts driven by ideologies, which have many similar features to religious phenomena. Whether wars are waged in the name of religion (the Crusades), manifest destiny (colonization of America), democracy (the second Gulf War), free-trade (the Opium Wars), or human rights (Bosnia) – the need to question the justification behind such conflicts remains the same. It might be that religion is merely one more force that divides us, but the divisions created by religions are only the other side of the unifying features they possess. In the next chapter I will show one way in which this was the case – whereby Latin-Christianity served to unify the various Christian states before finding itself divided over questions of authority.

8. Conclusion

The New Atheists, under the guise of conceptual clarity, want to focus on only the metaphysical aspect of religious belief. Indeed, they do manage to present an internally coherent approach to religion and it has many things to recommend it. Metaphysical claims do seem to be important to many religious traditions and some of the conflicts we see between religious believers and secularists do focus on metaphysical differences. Yet metaphysical beliefs are insufficient to explain the variety of religious phenomena and seem especially unsuited to understanding contemporary religious conflicts. Even when people adopt supernatural

metaphysical beliefs, religion encompasses a much wider range of phenomenon than these beliefs alone. Religion structures families, communities, normative expectations, conflicts, peace, and a whole range of other social and political issues. Such variegated phenomena make it difficult to precisely define. I argued that this was because the concept of religion is a ‘human kind’, meaning that it depends on human minds for its existence so that its very nature is altered by the way we interpret it.

Instead of a metaphysical conception of religion, I’ve argued for a political one that focuses on the social imaginaries that religion contributes towards. Religion transcends the public-private divide by acting as an intensely personal force at the same time as it serves as the locus for communal activity and organization. Whether our goal is to improve women’s rights, combat terrorism, or end civil wars – taking social and political forces into account in our examination of religion will be essential. The reflexive nature of religion, as a human kind, means that we will also have to be flexible in the way we approach it. Any approach the state takes towards religion, for example, will always have to walk a line between oppressing a religious group and allowing that group to use their religious affiliation unjustly. Most early-modern political philosophers saw religion as a key political force that needed to be properly understood to implement just political regimes. However, a social and political approach to religion does not mean that religion is automatically a force for good. So it is to the political critique of religion that I now turn and the question of whether secular solutions exist to problems of religious conflict.

III. From Souls to Citizens: Social Imaginaries and the Organization of Violence

Religion has struck many political philosophers as a particularly troublesome source of violence and secularism has long been thought to hold the secret to ending such violence. From this perspective, secularism acts as a restraint on religion to ensure that its private practice doesn't get out of hand. Contemporary political philosophers such as Charles Taylor and John Rawls look back to the seventeenth-century Wars of Religion as the paradigmatic example of religious conflict and see the regime of international law that is traced back to the Treaty of Westphalia as the secular solution to such conflicts.⁵⁷ However, a more thorough look at the way that secular political institutions and secular political principles functioned does away with this neat picture. In this chapter, I will examine sovereignty doctrine, which I take to be the major development of early-modern political philosophy. I argue that rather than acting as a neutral arbiter between different religious confessionals, sovereignty doctrine actually advocated the subsumption of religious functions under the authority of the state to create new national forms of governance. Secularism arises as the result of the state's appropriation of church power by placing ultimate authority in the hands of the sovereign. Further, if we examine sovereignty doctrine and its effects on non-European peoples then we will see that the Treaty of Westphalia

⁵⁷ Rawls sees the Wars of Religion as a paradigmatic example of the barriers to the idea of overlapping consensus that he believes liberalism is capable of establishing. He cites: "the views of Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth century. At that time there was not an overlapping consensus on the principle of toleration. Both faiths held that it was the duty of the ruler to uphold the true religion and to repress the spread of heresy and false doctrine" (Rawls 2005(1993), 148). According to Taylor: "the origin point of modern secularism was the Wars of Religion; or rather, the search in battlefield-fatigue and horror for a way out of them. The need was felt for a ground of coexistence for Christians of different confessional persuasions" (Taylor 1998, 32). Liberal political philosophers have seen religion as a particular source of conflict, even as they have drawn on various religious resources to construct their theories. See Brian T. McGraw (2010): "The liberal democratic tradition of political thought has long made religion an important, even central, subject of study and debate. Constructed in part as a means of avoiding the sorts of destructive religious wars that plagued post-Reformation Europe, liberalism has both relied on religious ideals to buttress its claims about human freedom and equality, and treated it as a threatening force, ready to upend political peace for the demands of faith" (1).

established an order that served to promote colonialism against non-European peoples at the same time as it promoted non-interference with other European states.

My goals are as follows: to show the major role that religion played in early-modern political philosophy and how that was incorporated into the sovereign model of the state; to combat the view that the modern, secular state is capable of neutrality vis a vis religion; and to combat the view that the secular nature of modern international law means that it is neutral to the different beliefs and values of the world's peoples. These observations will help me to emphasize the ways in which state power and legitimacy are at the heart of the secular turn in political philosophy.

1. Notes on Methodology

I want to take a moment to justify the approach I take in my examination of the secular transition in political philosophy.

This chapter is similar to William T. Cavanaugh's work in *The Myth of Religious Violence* (2009). Cavanaugh calls the belief that religion causes violence "one of the most prevalent myths in Western culture" (Cavanaugh 2009, 15). He cites nine leading scholars on religion as supporting this myth and argues that it has three components: that religion is absolutist, that it is divisive, and that it is irrational.⁵⁸ He aims his critique at the 'transhistorical' and 'transcultural' notion of religion used by these theorists which has become popular in

⁵⁸ The scholars he cites that connect religion and violence by noting its absolutist character are: John Hick, Charles Kimball, and Richard Wentz; those who emphasize religion's 'divisiveness' are Martin Marty, Mark Juergensmeyer, and David C. Rapoport; those who emphasize religion's 'non-rationality' are Bhikhu Parekh, R. Scott Appleby, and Charles Selengut. It is important to note that Cavanaugh praises the research and insights of some of these scholars (e.g. Juergensmeyer) and that he notes that there is a certain amount of nuance in the connection each of these scholars make between religion and violence: "For our purposes, 'religion causes violence' is simplified shorthand. No one, as far as I know, argues that the presence of religion necessarily always produces violence. Rather, the arguments see religion as especially inclined to produce violence, or as an especially significant factor among others in the production or exacerbation of violence" (Cavanaugh 2009, 17).

modern parlance. Religion in this sense is understood as a series of dogmas that are united through a common reference to the supernatural and distinct from other dogmas, such that we can distinguish between Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, and Islamic religions. The problem with such notions of religion, Cavanaugh argues, is that they transpose a modern concept of religion onto a historical period that understood and lived ‘religious’ lives in very different ways from how we now understand and practice it; furthermore, Western notions of religion have been exported (frequently through colonialism) to other cultures that also do not share such a neat division between religious and secular political institutions and practices. Cavanaugh believes that the motivations for separating religious from secular phenomena serves an ideological purpose:

In domestic politics, it serves to marginalize certain types of discourse labeled religious, while promoting the idea that the unity of the nation-state saves us from the divisiveness of religion. In foreign policy, the myth of religious violence helps to reinforce and justify Western attitudes and policies toward the non-Western world, especially Muslims, whose primary point of difference with the West is their stubborn refusal to tame religious passions in the public sphere. We claim to have learned the sobering lessons of religious warfare, while they have not. The myth of religious violence reinforces a reassuring dichotomy between their violence – which is absolutist, divisive, and irrational – and our violence, which is modest, unitive, and rational (Cavanaugh 2009, 183).

While I agree with Cavanaugh that religious political arrangements cannot empirically be shown to cause more violence than secular ones and that strictly separating religious and secular phenomena is largely impossible – I believe that differentiating what is religious from what is secular is a valuable exercise. First, despite the fact that I agree with Cavanaugh that religion is no *more* prone to violence than secularism, I hope to show that the way Latin Christendom ordered violence and the way that secular states in modern North Atlantic Civilization orders violence are different. Like Talal Asad, I aim to show that the secular “is neither continuous with the religious that supposedly preceded it (that is, it is not the latest phase of a sacred origin) nor a

simple break from it (that is, it is not the opposite, an essence that excludes the sacred)” (Asad 2003, 25). What is important, particularly for the field of political philosophy, is showing “how the changes in concepts articulate changes in practices” (ibid.).

Similar to Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age* (2007), I aim to contextualize the shift that takes place between ‘Latin-Christendom’ and our secular age to show how involved religious ideas were in the origins of secular thought. Taylor explains the transitional role between Latin Christendom’s social imaginary and that of modern secularity through the development of natural law philosophy and focuses primarily on the existential dimensions of this shift (Taylor 2007).⁵⁹ His goal was to argue against a ‘subtraction story’, which understands secularism in terms of what was left over once we abandoned our religious superstitions. Instead, he argues that the existential shift that takes place involved the gradual adoption of natural law principles, rather than the abandonment of religion. Natural law theory provided people with the psychological resources needed to insulate them from feelings of ‘openness’ towards spirits and a whole host of other supernatural phenomenon. Yet the fact that religions themselves also responded to these shifts shows that religion is not immune to the scientific and moral claims of modernity. Modernity has created the conditions for secularity, but it has also provided a whole host of different approaches to religious life that would not have been possible during the medieval period. Rather than being a repudiation of religion, Taylor argues that secularity involves and participates in religion. Modernity has changed the religious options that are available to us and created social conditions to allow non-participation in religious life. I believe

⁵⁹ Taylor’s purpose in writing *A Secular Age* was primarily to focus on what he calls ‘social imaginaries’, which are “the ways in which [people] imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations which are normally met, and the deeper normative images that underlie these expectations” (Taylor 2007, 171). He is concerned primarily with explaining how, existentially, people’s perception of the world went through a process of ‘disenchantment’. See also Ingrid Creppell’s distinction between existential and political secularization (Creppell 2010).

Taylor is generally correct to critique the ‘subtraction story’ with a more nuanced view of the changes that took place between the sixteenth and twenty-first centuries and take Taylor’s observations as the starting point for my analysis.

In contrast to Taylor, I want to look at the relationship between the philosophical and sociological underpinnings of the modern state. While Taylor’s work is important for establishing the series of micro-transitions that were necessary to create the existential conditions of modern-secularity it glosses over the violent character of these transitions. In chapter two, I argued that religion was best understood in terms of a social imaginary and my overall goal has been to understand religion’s political dimensions more in terms of the communal relationships that it enables than the metaphysical beliefs it might profess. In this chapter, I examine the transition between medieval and modern politics as understood by early-modern political philosophers. I take the development of the modern state to be a key sociological feature in this transition and sovereignty doctrine to be the key philosophical contribution to changes in political practice. Sociological changes paved the way for new developments in political theory that further precipitated change. Such changes were punctuated by episodes of extreme violence as the state reorganized its relationship with religion.⁶⁰ By understanding the transition in this way, we can recognize the way in which the secular turn in political philosophy merely reconfigures religious violence rather than doing away with it. While ‘secular political theory’ might be of an entirely different type than ‘religious political theory’, it would be premature to

⁶⁰ As noted above, these wars are often considered to have been between members of different religions, whereas Cavanaugh shows that the ‘Wars of Religion’ involved a number of agents at work, including secular rulers who hoped to expand their authority over local religious authorities. Thus: “The modern state was not simply a response to the advent of religious difference in the Reformation and the subsequent violence that religious difference unleashed....the transfer of power from the church to the state appears not so much as a solution to the wars in question, but as a cause of those wars. The so-called wars of religion appear as wars fought by state-building elites for the purpose of consolidating their power over the church and other rivals” (Cavanaugh 2009, 162).

think that it is more peaceful. While it may prevent certain types of violence, it promotes other forms that are written off because they are understood as being natural and necessary to political life. In doing so it makes ‘secular’ forms of violence invisible, while justifying a lack of interest in the motivations behind ‘irrational’, religious violence.⁶¹

In the first section, I outline some features of medieval political philosophy that promoted peace, as well as the ways in which violence was directed. I then look at the works of Niccolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes to show how their dramatic revaluation of desire and power enabled the subordination of religion by the state in political theory. Sovereignty doctrine saw the world as a fundamentally frightening and violent place and set up the state as the single entity capable of lessening these negative states of being. Thereafter, the state began to appropriate many of the functions previously fulfilled by the church, albeit in a modified form. Finally, I look at Hugo Grotius and Francisco de Vitoria’s contributions to modern international law to demonstrate how the modern normative order, while promoting peace in Europe, promoted violence and colonialism abroad. This is not only important because it exposes some of the bias in our institutions, but also because the history of that arbitrary bias has created a grossly unfair international political regime. Asad notes that:

The difficulty with secularism as a doctrine of war and peace in the world is not that it is European (and therefore alien to the non-West) but that it is closely connected with the rise of a system of capitalist nation-states – mutually suspicious and grossly unequal in power and prosperity, each possessing a collective personality that is differently mediated and therefore differently guaranteed and threatened (Asad 2003, 7).

⁶¹ Just as Taylor wants to draw attention to the ‘existential shift’ that takes place with the development of secularism because modern conditions make secularism appear so natural that we sometimes miss the positive content that it has, I want to draw attention to the ‘political shift’ that takes place with the development of secularism. If we accept the necessity of the modern-state (which seems extremely natural to us, given its universality) then it makes it more difficult to see how such states do in fact participate in high levels of violence that seem ‘natural’ when there is nothing to contrast them with. Talal Asad asks: “Can secularism then guarantee the peace it allegedly ensured in Euro-America’s early history – by shifting the violence of religious wars into the violence of national and colonial wars?” (Asad 2003, 6-7).

I take a few political philosophers as being paradigmatic examples of ‘medieval political philosophy’ and ‘modern political philosophy’. The thinkers I draw on are key figures in the canon of political philosophy (and sovereignty doctrine) and I take their effect on political practice to be particularly pronounced. The parts of St. Augustine’s thought that I focus on are those that try to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity to the philosophy of the Greeks. I chose *The City of God* as the work that most clearly explains the division between the earthly functions of the state and the transcendent function of the Church in medieval life. Thomas Aquinas serves as a transitional figure between medieval and modern political philosophy. He is one of many that brought Aristotle back into popularity in Latin Christendom and his attempts to reconcile Christian principles with Aristotle’s Natural Law theory was integral to its later adoption and development by Hobbes and Grotius⁶². Machiavelli and Hobbes are the first of the secular political philosophers that I discuss. What I highlight in their thinking is that rather than repudiating religion, they both treat religion as an important state institution. The concepts that I draw from these philosophers (sovereignty, desire, and power) are treated in very similar ways by other political philosophers and their treatment of these topics, I will argue, connects the existential dimension of secularism that Taylor discusses to modern state structures and institutions.

Following Taylor, I argue that natural law provided a transitional set of beliefs that allowed political philosophers to move from justifying political authority on religious grounds to justifying it on ‘natural’, irreligious grounds. At first this was accomplished by wresting religious authority from an independent caste of priests and placing it under the sovereignty of the

⁶² See Stephen C. Neff’s description of the intellectual inheritance of Grotius in his introduction to Grotius’s *On the Law of War and Peace* (xxiii).

monarch – granting a religious aura to the state’s authority. Over time, the state increasingly justified itself on the principles of natural law – principles which were taken to hold even without the divine right of kings to sanction them.⁶³ Unlike Taylor, I want to focus less on the existential shift that takes place in people’s beliefs and more on the types of violence that each regime justified. Doing this brings into contrast some of the ways that religions can actually promote peace and some of the ways that secular states promote violence.⁶⁴ Seeing the secular state as every bit as contingent and as premised on absolutism as religious communities will, I believe, help us to more fairly approach issues of religious and cultural difference. Thus, when philosophers like Brian Leiter ask: ‘why tolerate religion?’, we might respond ‘why tolerate the state?’

2. The City of God and the City of Man

Medieval life relied on a variety of governing structures that enmeshed both church officials and local lords in everyday politics. Despite the obvious overlap between secular and ecclesiastical politics, political philosophy in the middle ages maintained their theoretical bifurcation. Saint Augustine’s *City of God* laid the groundwork for their separation in the fourth century, with a model that viewed the church as the representative of the heavenly city and the secular rulers as a necessary evil brought about by man’s fall from the grace of God.⁶⁵ Augustine rejected the moral authority of the philosophers on the basis that they lacked the authority of God

⁶³ While this chapter’s focus is on the establishment of sovereignty by combining both religious and secular authority under the state, the next chapter will look at how the sovereign state increasingly turned to non-religious ideas for its foundations – with a focus on the emerging notions of nationalism, liberalism, and communism.

⁶⁴ I’m indebted to Asad for this observation. He notes that a “secular state does not guarantee toleration; it puts into play different structures of ambition and fear. The law never seeks to eliminate violence since its object is always to *regulate* violence” (Asad 2003, 8).

⁶⁵ “And thus it has come to pass, that though there are very many and great nations all over the earth, whose rites and customs, speech, arms, and dress, are distinguished by marked differences, yet there are no more than two kinds of human society, which we may justly call two cities, according to the language of our Scriptures. The one consists of those who wish to live after the flesh, the other of those who wish to live after the spirit; and when they severally achieve what they wish, they live in peace, each after their kind” (Augustine 1890, XIV.1).

– and blamed the licentious behaviour of the Roman gods for the concupiscence of the people (Augustine 1890, II.7). Augustine contrasts faith with wisdom, with the former being much more capable of inspiring virtue. The disorders of the secular realm, wherein kingdoms were formed and destroyed, were contrasted with the eternal felicity of the city of God.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the divisions of the earthly realm were contrasted with the unity of the Catholic faith – exemplified by the unity achieved with Christ through the Eucharist (Augustine 1890, XXI.25). Despite the subordination of the earthly ruler to the divine order, secular rulers were still granted the authority to enact punishments and even to wage war – so long as they waged it “in obedience to the divine command” (Augustine 1890, I.21).

Social life in Latin Christendom was organized primarily around the family and the church. Family relationships were meant to regulate ‘the City of Man’, through a combination of Roman and customary law. The obligations of social life were distributed interpersonally through oaths of fealty and family alliances, while the church served as a universal guarantor of adherence to these obligations. While these ties did not all fit one mould (the term feudalism only originates in the 18th century), they were notably more localized and personal than modern ties (Bloch 1964). The ‘universalism’ of Catholicism was useful to the earthly rulers because it provided a dependable status quo to a Europe that was fraught with political instability.⁶⁷ The

⁶⁶ “But the earthly city, which shall not be everlasting...has its good in this world, and rejoices in it with such joy as such things can afford. But as this is not a good which can discharge its devotees of all distresses, this city is often divided against itself by litigations, wars, quarrels, and such victories as are either life-destroying or short-lived” (Augustine 1890, XV.4).

⁶⁷ Alain Badiou looks to Saint Paul for the paradigmatic example of a universalism. Badiou’s Paul is fundamentally devoted to faith in Christ’s universal message over the adoption of proper ‘Christian’ customs. Paul’s message was successful because he realized that “Christian militantism must traverse worldly differences indifferently and avoid all casuistry over customs” (Badiou 2003, 100). The spread of a universal moral community took priority over the moral content of that authority, which simultaneously increased the ease with which it spread and allowed for greater heterodoxy in the forms of worship adopted in different locales. This universalism, however, while relatively devoid of content, still held the status of an absolute truth. Therefore, while various pagan customs and traditions were maintained, they were ultimately subject to the absolute truth of ‘Christ resurrected’ – a factor which created the conditions for the ultimate subsumption of pagan practices under the authority of Christianity.

Church extended family ties, guaranteed agreements, provided divine laws to limit the exercise of political authority, and (perhaps most importantly) provided a transcendent purpose to life.⁶⁸ The conversions of the Hungarians and the Vikings extended Christianity steadily to the North and East, increasing the number of settled kings and lords who had more to gain from the surplus extracted from their vassal subjects than raids against their neighbors.⁶⁹ The church provided a ‘universal’ community capable of absorbing non-members, a common language to communicate across vast distances, and a common cultural background that spread feudal ties of dependence. This moral and intellectual community provided a cultural unity, where political unity proved impossible due to the power vacuum left by the Roman Empire.

As much as Christianity aimed to establish a universal community, it also excluded certain external and internal groups. The power of Christian universalism lay in the fact that it was willing to include anyone that accepted the miraculous resurrection of God’s son. The spread of Christianity managed to overcome ethnic, tribal, and linguistic differences across a wider swath of territory than the Roman Empire. Yet, while the Viking and Hungarian threat was resolved through their integration into Latin Christendom, Islam resisted conversion so that religious (as well as secular) factors encouraged violence between the opposing faiths.⁷⁰ The

⁶⁸ It is healthy to be skeptical of claims that religion actually made people more likely to keep their word, limited excesses by the state, extended loyalty to those outside the family, or made people any more likely to ‘live for the next life’ than they may have been otherwise. However, historians are largely in agreement that elites commonly spoke as though such things mattered. Furthermore, the institutional power of the church meant that it was easier to structure violence outwardly (towards pagans and Muslims) rather than against other Christians and gave the church an interest in guaranteeing agreements that it brokered. For example, the power of popes to crown kings, while hardly the sole factor in deciding the succession, undoubtedly impacted a monarch’s perceived legitimacy.

⁶⁹ Marc Bloch describes medieval Europe as being a system of ties of dependence that came about due to the political and cultural disorders from the invasions of the Scandinavians in the North, the Hungarians in the East, and the Muslims in the South. The invasions from the North and East were dealt with through a combination of military opposition, the granting of fiefs, and religious conversion (Bloch 1964).

⁷⁰ I use the terms religious and secular here anachronistically. Those waging wars would not have thought about what they were doing in these terms. Nevertheless, the development of these terms comes out of a need to explore a prior time during which the governance structures of church and state were thoroughly enmeshed and compare it to a more recent time in which church and state are seen as relatively distinct. Their use here is meant to show how difficult it is to actually separate them.

universal character of Christianity is what made it so successful in pacifying the Hungarians and the Vikings, while it also set the stage for terrible conflicts with Islam – another major universal religion. The Crusades are often referenced as a virulent example of the type of violence that religion gives rise to and they are still remembered as a particularly destructive chapter in the history of Christian and Muslim exchanges. However, we must also recognize the effect that a transcendent purpose to life had on the direction violence took. Instead of conflicts between petty lords, which were discouraged by the church (as a tendency, rather than a rule) – there was a religious conflict sanctioned by the very institution that was meant to establish universal and eternal peace. This is not meant to sanction the Crusades, but to note that the peace that was internally promoted meant that some violence was directed outwardly as a result. Some of the peace internal to Latin-Christendom might even be credited to the outward direction of violence and the increase in prestige resulting from participating in the Crusades as opposed to the iniquity of prosecuting an unjust war against a fellow Christian ruler.⁷¹

If the outward violence of Latin Christendom is best exemplified by the Crusades, its internal violence is most apparent in the Inquisition. Christendom, once aided by the fact that it was separated from political identities and any conflict with local law, now began to turn in on itself and sought a greater alignment between law, community, and belief. The universalism that enabled its expansion also meant that exclusion from that community was that much more terrible. Excommunication was often a death sentence in a world that relied on interpersonal obligations. Furthermore, just as the First Crusade's success had confirmed many in the belief

⁷¹ Like the king's plan to embark on a Crusade to Jerusalem to direct his vassals' attention away from plots against him in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, we can imagine how the Church structured violence to provide peace at home and direct it abroad. The Crusades in particular, remain one of the clearest examples of the pitch religious violence could reach when directed abroad. While the inquisition demonstrates how religious violence can be expressed at home – especially when under the influence of secular powers with much to gain from political scapegoating.

that it had been authorized by God, so the loss of Jerusalem in 1187 was a prelude to the inward direction of religious violence. Observing this, Jonathan Riley-Smith hypothesizes that “holy war, whatever the religion involved, has the tendency to turn in on the society that has bred it” (Riley-Smith 2008, 25). Beginning with the Cathar heresy in 1207 – inquisitions were prosecuted with an aim to achieve greater orthodoxy and maintain the authority of the Pope over the church faithful. Like the Crusades, this violence was meant to unify the faithful by rooting out heretics and schismatics. This tendency towards homogenization – which increased over time – would later become a hallmark feature of modernization. Secular, as well as ecclesiastical authorities, used the inquisition to suit political goals as much as to maintain orthodoxy.

The prosperity of the High Middle Ages allowed medieval theology and philosophy to flourish – both because of greater domestic resources and because the philosophical works brought back to Europe during the Crusades allowed the development of Scholasticism. While St. Augustine’s work was meant to provide a transcendent end to human life that contrasted sharply with the ‘City of Man’, Aquinas – drawing on Aristotle – saw the state as a body that was entirely natural (Copleston 1977, 45). Thomism saw the secular government, while still subservient to God’s will, as partially redeemed, since it was based on a natural law established by God for the good of humanity. Aquinas’s interpretation of natural law created a link between God’s eternal law and the particular laws that ‘man’ developed. Rather than being a profane necessity resulting from the fall, Aquinas saw the state as a natural part of God’s divine order.

Aquinas’s natural law theory remains thoroughly medieval in a number of ways. First, divine law (and therefore the authority of the church) maintained its supremacy over human

law.⁷² Furthermore, spirit is still opposed to the flesh for Aquinas. Desire, or ‘concupiscence’, is the cause of original sin and the deviation of Adam from God’s justice (Aquinas 1947, PIIQ82A3). Bad laws are those that impose unequal burdens and are the result of “cupidity or vainglory” on the part of the sovereign (Aquinas 1947, PIIQ96A4). Unlike Machiavelli and Hobbes, vices are the cause of political strife and only faith and the rational subordination of the passions to the will are capable of correcting such vices. Most people are virtuous and the coercive power of the law therefore does not apply to them – it applies only to those corrupted by their vices. Finally, ‘just wars’ are still permitted, but schism is not – as the unity of God’s natural and divine law are part of its very nature (Aquinas 1947, PIIIQ40A1). While human law might diverge because of local circumstance – there can only be one interpretation of divine law (Aquinas 1947, PIIIQ39A3).⁷³

3. Love, Fear, and the Centralization of the State

Immanuel Wallerstein notes that the sociological phenomenon of the modern nation-state emerged prior to its recognition.⁷⁴ He describes the development of ‘nation-states’ in Western Europe as being the result of a crisis of feudalism, new developments in military technology, and territorial expansion. The crisis in feudalism was the product of “secular [market] trends, an immediate cyclical crisis, and climatological decline” (Wallerstein 2011, 37). The land hit the technological limit of what could be extracted from it, but the nobility and the church continued to extract greater and greater surpluses from the peasant population through the system of feudal

⁷² He maintained (following Augustine) that an unjust law seems to be no law at all. However, he notes that it still ought to be followed to avoid scandal or disturbance – with the sole exception of laws that violate divine law, which justify rebellion against the sovereign (Aquinas 1947, P2Q96A4).

⁷³ This is in marked contrast to the Hobbesian, positive law tradition which held the inverse view – that people might believe many different things but that there could only be one sovereign law in any given territory.

⁷⁴ Following Yves Renouard, Wallerstein notes that the modern boundaries of England, France, and Spain were determined in a series of battles fought between 1212 and 1214 (Wallerstein 2011, 32).

rents. The result was a sudden contraction of the food supply, increasing peasant rebellions, and general instability. Changes in technology privileged centralized, large-scale armed forces and expanded state bureaucracies to manage and oversee the finances required to maintain such forces. Wallerstein describes the four main mechanisms used by princes in the sixteenth century for the development of the state: “bureaucratization, monopolization of force, creation of legitimacy, and homogenization of the subject population” (Wallerstein 2011, 136). In short, there developed a new way of imagining a community – premised neither on the family (which was too narrow), nor the church (which was too broad).⁷⁵ Since consent in every matter and over a period of time in which interests constantly shifted was nearly impossible to achieve – this unity had to be backed up by force. The state found the power to maintain its unity in three places – religion, state machinery, and national consciousness.

Spain, France, Portugal, and England were among the first states in Europe to achieve centralized unification – but the first to theorize about such unification was Niccolo Machiavelli in divided Italy. Scholars are divided on the proper interpretation of Machiavelli’s views on religion. Leo Strauss sees Machiavelli as a ‘teacher of evil’, who ignored the crucial question of the veracity of revealed religion, and collapsed the classical difference between a ‘prince’ and a ‘tyrant’ (Strauss 1978). Following Strauss, Vickie B. Sullivan argues that Machiavelli’s view is essentially anti-Christian – drawing on the lessons of republican Rome to develop a vision of Italy free from Christian domination (Sullivan 1996). On the other hand, Maurizio Viroli sees Machiavelli’s prince as an ‘armed prophet’ who attempts the difficult task of organizing new

⁷⁵ I will discuss Benedict Anderson’s seminal work *Imagined Communities* further in chapter four, as it deserves fuller treatment than I have time to give it here. For the time being, I merely want to note the importance of the development of a new kind of communal organization, for which people were willing to fight and die, and the novelty of ‘national consciousness’ relative to a consciousness predicated on family ties or religion (the two forms of community that structured medieval life).

political institutions with an understanding of God based heavily on the views of the Florentine Renaissance at the time (Viroli 2010). Both interpretations agree, however, that religion in Machiavelli's thought is meant to be under the control of state authorities. The alignment between religion and the state is meant to achieve intellectual and moral unity for the sake of founding a powerful new state. In this sense, *rather than modern-secularism being premised on the separation between church and state – it is in fact better understood as the appropriation of church functions by the state.*⁷⁶

Machiavelli's thought represents a major pivot point in philosophy that turns the transcendent moral authority of medieval political thought to practical political ends. Unlike Aquinas, Machiavelli does not see a beneficent order in nature – but rather an ocean of obstacles and opportunities upon which we can virtuously act. His materialist examination of politics does not do away with religion, instead it directs religion to the task of state formation. Machiavelli begins with Polybius's theory of a cycle of governments, wherein each of the good types of government (monarchy, aristocracy, democracy) 'easily passes' into its pernicious form (tyranny, oligarchy, anarchy). Furthermore, he notes that "there are no means whereby to prevent it passing into its contrary, on account of the likeness which in such a case virtue has to vice" (Machiavelli 1976, I.2). It is primarily inheritance, whereby the prince's successors are chosen for their lineage rather than their ability, which leads all governments towards corruption. While medieval political philosophy sought to teach virtue and religion as a means of forestalling

⁷⁶ José Casanova notes: "the term 'secularization' was first used to signify the massive expropriation and appropriation, usually by the state, of monasteries, landholdings, and the mortmain wealth of the church after the Protestant Reformation and the ensuing religious wars. Since then, secularization has come to designate the 'passage', transfer, or relocation of persons, things, functions, meanings, and so forth, from their traditional location in the religious sphere to the secular spheres. Thus, it has become customary to designate as secularization the appropriation, whether forcible or by default, by secular institutions of functions that traditionally had been in the hands of ecclesiastical institutions" (Casanova 1994, 13).

corruption, Machiavelli imagines a prince who uses his power to found a new type of state – one capable of overcoming the vicissitudes of fortune.

The state is created by the prince *ex nihilo*, taking the place of God in the natural order.⁷⁷ Machiavelli describes nature (*fortuna*) as something that the prince can stand outside of and affect through an act of will (*virtu*). The prince stands outside the order of nature, observing the laws according to which it works with a practical political project in mind – the formation of a unified Italian state. In the words of Waller R. Newell:

recognizing *Fortuna*, we recognize that nature does not support classical or Christian virtue and offers no prospect for peace and decency. This awful truth, however, liberates us to face the world without delusion and bend it to our will, making it as productive and liveable as we can. This requires a politics in which acquisitiveness is liberated and served by the new art of government (Newell, 152).

Machiavelli's revaluation of the role of desire allows his prince to dispense with justice when justice is not in the best interests of the state. The chief virtue of princes now lies in founding kingdoms rather than in following divine justice. The worldly interests of princes replace the divine will of God. It is this contrast that will later allow secularization theorists, such as Max Weber, to contrast the worldliness of the state and economy to the 'world-rejecting' logic of religion.⁷⁸

Machiavelli saw the bifurcation of the religious and secular powers of society as a threat to Italian security and it is for this reason that religion plays such a prominent role in his thought.

⁷⁷ I am indebted to Waller R. Newell for this insight into *The Prince* (Newell 2005). While I disagree with the strong association Newell draws between Machiavelli and modern totalitarianism, I agree that Machiavelli is a key figure in the transition to modern political thought – which makes modern totalitarianism possible.

⁷⁸ "The bureaucratic state apparatus, and the rational *homo politicus* integrated into the state, manage affairs, including the punishment of evil, when they discharge business in the most ideal sense, according to rational rules of the state order. In this, political man acts just like the economic man, in a matter-of-fact manner 'without regard to the person,' *sine ira et studio*, without hate and therefore without love. By virtue of its depersonalization, the bureaucratic state, in important points, is less accessible to substantive moralization than were the patriarchal orders of the past, however many appearances may point to the contrary....The state's absolute end is to safeguard (or to change) the external and internal distribution of power; ultimately, this end must seem meaningless to any universalist religion of salvation" (Weber 1958, 333-4).

He believed that it “is the Church that has kept, and keeps, Italy divided” (Machiavelli 1976, I.12). This was because Rome lacked sufficient temporal power to take control of Italy itself and abused its authority to prevent any other state from rising in prominence. It therefore divided Italy by dividing the peoples’ allegiances. However, the Church is contrasted with religion, which he believes to be entirely necessary for a state to prosper. He even goes so far as to say that there has never been a legislator who has attempted to introduce ‘extraordinary laws’ to a people without ‘recourse to God’ (Machiavelli 1976, I.11). Despite the primary virtue of princes being the founding of kingdoms, Machiavelli says in *The Discourses* that even greater than founding a kingdom is founding a religion, through which that kingdom might be kept unified (Machiavelli 1976, I.11). Rather than the Catholic Church being the guardian of religion, he blames its corruption for the ‘irreligiousness’ of Italy.⁷⁹ Furthermore, he blames the current state of Christianity for the political problems of Italy, while praising the principles of Christianity – setting up a contrast of good and bad uses of religion.⁸⁰ Just as the structure of the state (a single ruler) gave no indication as to the nature of the government (monarchy/tyranny), so the form of a religion (Christianity) gives no indication as to its religiousness (true/false religion). In the formation of a unified Italian state, the major obstacle will be the abuse of religion by Rome. This can be corrected by a good prince, provided that he: “should appear a man of compassion, a man of good faith, a man of integrity, a kind and a religious man. And there is nothing so

⁷⁹ He states that “owing to the bad examples set by the court of Rome, Italy has lost all devotion and all religion. Attendant upon this are innumerable inconveniences and innumerable disorders; for as, where there is religion, it may be taken for granted that all is going well, so, where religion is wanting, one may take for granted the opposite” (Machiavelli 1976, I.12).

⁸⁰ “If such a religious spirit had been kept up by the rulers of the Christian commonwealth as was ordained for us by its founder, Christian states and republics would have been much more united and much more happy [sic] than they are. Nor if one would form a conjecture as to the causes of its decline can one do better than look at those peoples who live in the immediate neighborhood of the Church of Rome, which is the head of our religion, and see how there is less religion among them than elsewhere. Indeed, should anyone reflect on our religion as it was when founded, and then see how different the represent usage is, he would undoubtedly come to the conclusion that it is approaching either ruin or a scourge” (Machiavelli 1976, I.12).

important as to seem to have this last quality” (Machiavelli 1981, XVIII).

The concepts of religion and truth are tightly bound to appearances in Machiavelli's thought. Both are examined instrumentally rather than metaphysically. What concerns Machiavelli about religion is not whether it is true or not, but what effect it provokes in the people.

The rulers of a republic or of a kingdom, therefore, should uphold the basic principles of the religion which they practice in, and, if this be done, it will be easy for them to keep their commonwealth religious, and, in consequence, good and united. They should also foster and encourage everything likely to be of help to this end, even though they be convinced that this is quite fallacious. And the more should they do this the more they know of natural laws (Machiavelli 1976, I.12).

Machiavelli's theory looks at the political utility of religion. However, it cannot simply be used by the powerful to manipulate the people. The people will believe in religions that keep them united and prosperous but will become incredulous and cease to uphold state institutions if they discover they are being manipulated for the benefit of elites.⁸¹ We can therefore contrast 'religion' (proper) which creates unity, with 'corrupt religion' which results in 'innumerable disorders'. Furthermore, Machiavelli believed it was necessary to interpret religion according to *virtu* rather than idleness, which the Church had neglected to do.⁸² The unity brought about by Christianity needed the martial *virtu* of the ancient Romans – a position that Machiavelli

⁸¹ “But when the oracles began to say what was pleasing to the powerful, and this deception was discovered by the people, they became incredulous and inclined to subvert any good institution” (Machiavelli 1976, I.12).

⁸² “But, though it looks as if the world were become effeminate and as if heaven were powerless, this undoubtedly is due rather to the pusillanimity of those who have interpreted our religion in terms of idleness [*l'ozio*], not in terms of *virtu*. For, had they borne in mind that religion permits us to exalt and defend the fatherland, they would have seen that it also wishes us to love and honour it, and to train ourselves to be such that we may defend it” (Machiavelli 1976, II.2). I've slightly modified the translation provided by Bernard Crick, which reads *laissez faire* instead of idleness to translate the word *l'ozio*, as I believe it's a better representation of Machiavelli's original meaning. It's also worth noting that the idleness of the clergy meant that they were wealthy without partaking in any of the functions of state bureaucrats – namely, martial virtue. They thus received part of the surplus from the peasantry without contributing to the primary function of the state.

describes as the correct interpretation of religion.⁸³ Religion is the force that binds the prince's troops to him and ensures that they keep their oaths, something that is lacking in mercenaries and the reason that he cautions the prince against them. The prince requires the genuine faith of the people, which is something money cannot buy. Religion, from this perspective, operates as a faith in one's prince, by both the military and the people. The 'appearance' of religious faith must be fostered because there are always instances when a person's private interest is not served by their service to the community and therefore they need faith in a transcendent notion of their communal obligations to keep them from abandoning the prince at such moments.

All of this is to say, that the formation of a national state involves the formation of a civic consciousness that binds the people to the state (in Machiavelli's case – a prince) in a way that employs many of the same symbolic tools and devotional practices that were employed by the church. *'Nationalism' and 'ideology' come to replace 'religion' in the secular frame of mind – but the function that they serve in binding diverse people together in a common community takes on much the same role.*⁸⁴ It was through a "pious work of cruelty" that Ferdinand of Aragon established the modern state of Spain through the expulsion of the Moors (Machiavelli 1981, XXI).⁸⁵ Machiavelli's prince, despite the noble ends he seeks, is undoubtedly cruel when cruelty is in service to the state – but he must use the 'cloak of religion' to accomplish such things. The religious fervour with which the state is supported is most evident in the famous 'Exhortation to

⁸³ Viroli devotes much of his work, *Machiavelli's God*, to an examination of the religious climate in which Machiavelli lived. He finds that Machiavelli's interpretation of religion along civil lines was actually quite in keeping with the dominant republican attitude towards religion held in fifteenth century Florence (Viroli 2010, 43-61).

⁸⁴ This argument will be explored more fully in the next chapter.

⁸⁵ This has always struck me as one of the most terrifying passages in Machiavelli's thought. The 'pious work of cruelty' that he mentions is the forced conversion and expulsion of the Jewish and Muslim people living in Spain. Machiavelli seems to recognize here that the modern state (a state he advocated) was often predicated on genocidal campaigns meant to unify the population under the prince.

Liberate Italy from the Barbarians’, where Machiavelli implores Lorenzo de Medici to avail himself of this new form of power. God is mentioned more in this last chapter than in the rest of the work combined and the mythical founders Moses, Theseus, Romulus, and Cyrus, first mentioned in chapter VI are brought back as models to emulate. The people’s devotion to the prince (inspired by a desire to be rid of the ‘stink’ of barbarous domination) hits its highest pitch. The religion Machiavelli hopes for is a religion for the Italian people, proclaimed by the prince. This religion must remain true, rather than allowing itself to become corrupted, by serving as a unifying symbol of the people and guaranteeing the faith they keep with one another and their prince.

It should be apparent from this that the truth (in the metaphysical sense) of a religion is secondary to its normative value. In this sense, religion has more in common with ideology than with scientific theories about the universe. There is of course an important history of conflicts between modern scientific theories and religion; but in terms of state politics such conflicts have been minor relative to the conflicts between different religious communities. While these communities were formed on the basis of theoretical claims surrounding the existence of national identity, the right of kings to rule, and other such beliefs that would allow a Machiavellian prince to rule – the emphasis and use of these ideas is decidedly different in a number of ways, not the least of which is the loss of universalism. While the nation does attempt to transcend differences (especially religious differences) – its ambitions are limited to a particular people. If a new group of people are incorporated into a nation (such as the Moors in Spain being incorporated into the Spanish state) – the prince is at constant risk of losing these new territories and may need to resort to ‘acts of pious cruelty’ to maintain control.

4. Scriptural Analogues to Sovereignty Doctrine

Having discussed the role that religion played in the intellectual and moral reform advocated by Machiavelli's philosophy, I now turn to the way the modern state was modeled on a reinterpretation of scripture and its relationship with moral theory. In this section I hope to show that the internal theorization of the citizen-state relationship was premised even more firmly on a Christian religious imaginary than the open ended version of state-religious formation advocated by Machiavelli. In other words, the modern state not only depends on religious fervor to create a monopoly over force, but the relationship between the citizen and the state was understood in particularly (Protestant) Christian terms in the natural law tradition.

Thomas Hobbes, like Machiavelli, re-examines the role of desire and power in political theory and radically reinterprets natural law theory according to his materialist reading of scripture. For Hobbes, rather than carrying a moral message for rational beings to better align their lives, natural law demonstrates that human beings are motivated more by fear than by love.⁸⁶ Like Machiavelli, his goal is to use the fear that human beings have and their desire to preserve themselves to escape the state of nature (Hobbes 1985, 186). Unlike Machiavelli, however, Hobbes is writing with unified, post-reformation England in mind, where the prince had already established his own Church. The corruption that Machiavelli (and later Martin Luther) observed amongst the clergy, split the church and became the basis for conflict and sedition. Hobbes sought to curb the 'endless civil wars' that such divisions caused by

⁸⁶ Compare the fundamental law of nature for Aquinas "good is to be done and pursued and evil is to be avoided" (Aquinas 1947, PIIQ94A2); with the first precepts of nature developed by Hobbes, "That every man, ought to endeavour Peace, as farre as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek, and use, all helps, and advantages of Warre" (Hobbes 1985, 190). The emphasis in Aquinas is to prevent evil by teaching people not to practice it, whereas Hobbes hopes to prevent evil by discussing how to avoid suffering from it.

maintaining the unitary nature of secular and spiritual power.⁸⁷ He accomplished this not by dismissing ecclesiastical power, but by combining it with, and subordinating it to, sovereign power.

Hobbes has been styled an atheist by many of his seventeenth century critics as well as by contemporary proponents (Martinich 1992, 9). A.P. Martinich attacks the secularist interpretation of Hobbes, wherein references to religion are understood to be tangential to his overall political project.⁸⁸ Instead, Martinich argues, Hobbes “is trying to supply a theoretical justification for believing in Scripture, which he thinks is under subtle attack from both incipient modern science and self-appointed interpreters with disruptive political motives” (Martinich 1992, 14). While Martinich believes that Hobbes was a key figure in the development of secularism, he believes that this was an unintended consequence of Hobbes’s work. Like Newton and Descartes, Hobbes’s work will ultimately serve to undermine the religious institutions that he believed in. However, despite his failure to maintain the importance of religion in the face of new social and scientific developments, Hobbes’s legacy has been to develop a body of work which explains the motivations of modern humans so accurately that it could be described as a “Bible for modern man” (Martinich 1992, 45). Hobbes maintains the relevance of scripture, while changing its interpretation to demonstrate modern principles of statecraft. In this sense, Hobbes’s secularism is not a repudiation of religion, but an honest attempt at its reform.

⁸⁷ “Temporall and Spirituall Government, are but two words brought into the world, to make men see double, and mistake their Lawfull Sovereign” (Hobbes 1985, 498).

⁸⁸ Willis B. Glover gives a number of compelling reasons to resist the tendency to interpret Hobbes as an atheist. (1) He never claims to be an atheist and wrote numerous denials that this was the case. (2) That even some of those who give atheistic interpretations of Hobbes (such as Leslie Stephen) admit that they suspect Hobbes himself believed in God. (3) A number of scholars not only read Hobbes as a Christian, but see his views of religion as “essential to his political philosophy” (Glover 1960).

For Hobbes, good and evil are not transcendent states made known to humans through their use of natural reason; instead, they are relative states that pertain to the desires of individuals to pursue or avoid certain objects. Likewise, he understands power to be the means to obtain such private desires. In contrast to classical and medieval philosophy, Hobbes ascribes “a perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death” to ‘all mankind’ (Hobbes 1985, 161).⁸⁹ Power itself, however, receives an incredibly democratic character in Hobbes’ revaluation; for it is divided into the physical power of the individual and the sovereign power of the people united together. The sovereign commands obedience by virtue of his or her power, but that power is itself predicated on obedience. The democratic nature of power does not mean that it is democratically executed; rather, its unitary nature (and for Hobbes it must be unitary – or it ceases to function effectively and becomes a power divided) means that it is best executed by a singular will. This unification of the ‘Multitude’ allows “the Generation of that great Leviathan, or rather (to speak more reverently) of that *Mortall God*, to which we owe under the *Immortall God*, our peace and defense” (Hobbes 1985, 227). Hobbes bases the absolute moral and political authority of the state on an analogy with a Judeo-Christian model of God. More importantly, the normative framework provided by religion becomes the very basis for the unitary personality of the state.

Religion remains an important governing institution for the state, but in the secularized form of a national character. The way in which Hobbes develops the analogy between the sovereign and God is largely in the direction of what we have come to call secularism. As A.P. Martinich notes: “Hobbes...transformed religious concepts into secular concepts. For example,

⁸⁹ Hobbes understands this revaluation of desire and power in specific contrast to the ancients – “For there is no such *Finis ultimus*, (utmost ayme,) nor *Summum Bonum*, (greatest Good,) as is spoken of in the Books of the old Morall Philosophers. Nor can a man more live, whose Desires are at an end, than he, whose Senses and Imaginations are at a stand” (Hobbes 1985, 160).

the biblical and medieval model of God's method of creating the world becomes the model for creating the commonwealth. The biblical and medieval idea that salvation comes after death is changed into the view that the commonwealth provides salvation in this life" (Martinich 1992, 10). Again, secularism is not the same as religion and there are a number of developments that Hobbes makes that depart from what we might call religion. What Hobbes does not abandon, however, are religious authority, religious doctrine, or religious identity.⁹⁰ These facets of religion are incorporated under the aegis of the modern state. Like Machiavelli, he develops a contrast between 'true religion' and 'superstition' and understands his philosophical contribution to take place in terms of religious reform, rather than as an attack on religion.

The 'Mortall God' of the state derives its authority from an oath by each individual to renounce their natural right and place it in the hands of the Leviathan. The basis of the oath that Hobbes believes to be the only force capable of ending the war of all against all is God, for "there is no Swearing by any thing which the Swearer thinks not God" (Hobbes 1985, 201). A transcendent notion of God that stands above the 'Mortall God' of the sovereign loses all specificity beyond calling the state into being. Faith in a transcendent God is needed to establish the state, but after its establishment all authority resides in the sovereign. The sovereign's

⁹⁰ I've been challenged with the objection that someone might say that Hobbes keeps authority, doctrine, and identity – but abandons their religious form. "Aren't authority, doctrine, and identity broader concepts and notions than religious authority, religious doctrine, and religious identity?" I have two responses to this. First, one of the major themes of my dissertation is precisely that the distinction between 'political authority' and 'religious authority' seems arbitrary. If we want to understand disputes between secularism and religion – we gain a clearer understanding when we compare the particular features of 'religion' with particular features of 'secularism'. If we want to critique religious authority, we ought to compare it with secular forms of authority. If we want to critique religious forms of identity, we must compare them with secular forms of identity. Second, I find Hobbes is a particularly interesting figure in political philosophy in part because he uses very religious language, even as he sets out a natural law theory that justifies the state independently of a religious outlook. Furthermore, Hobbes' notions of 'authority, doctrine, and identity' all fit my definition of religion (beliefs, practices, institutions and identities that unite their adherents in relation to the divine) and my definition of secularism (practices, institutions and identities that place absolute political authority in the hands of the sovereign people). In this way, Hobbes serves as an important transitional figure in the study of the changes between a religious and secular social imaginary.

absolute authority is then capable of putting an end to the anarchic state of nature. Prudential interest is not sufficient to end the war of all against all. For that, we require faith in the covenant made by people when they “*lay down [their] right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men as [they] would allow other men against [themselves]*” (Hobbes 1985, 190). Without faith, it would be a strange claim that we can be secure in the speech acts of others to renounce their right to all things. Why not maintain, as did Aquinas, that the state of nature obliges us to respect the lives and property of others? This is because, for Hobbes, while faith is necessary, it is not sufficient to establish an obligation. One must also be able to rely on social sanction. Faith alone is insufficient because we lack the sense of certainty that is enabled by power; however, power alone is insufficient, since individuals are incapable of protecting themselves in the absence of a civil power – one that is premised on a certain amount of faith.

I’ve been challenged with the claim that I am conflating different meanings of the term faith here. That there is a difference between faith as ‘trust in a person’ and faith as ‘belief in something that cannot be demonstrated’ or faith as ‘membership in a particular community such as Islam or Christianity’. I think that in spite of the lack of precision and the way in which common speech employs the word ‘faith’ it remains helpful in understanding religious phenomena. First, in the Christian tradition there is a strong connection between ‘trust in a person’ and ‘belief in something that cannot be demonstrated’. Hobbes brings out the anxiety that people have over this lack of certainty in the state of nature. In order to trust one another, we need to be able to demonstrate a deep and abiding commitment to a given normative order. This order does not exist in nature, according to Hobbes. In order to establish it we need to place our own powers (physical, intellectual, and moral) into the hands of the state. We can only have the sense of certainty that Hobbes talks about if we are in a sovereign political community, which

backs up its normative order with power. In this sense, the word ‘faith’ helpfully explains the linkages between these different definitions. Trust in the political institutions and in one’s compatriots is one of the hallmark features of modern stability. *Fides*, the Latin word from which we derive our word ‘faith’ carries heavy connotations of loyalty. ‘Losing faith’ in the democratic process of a country, in the moral authority of a church, or the neutrality of a judicial body are each marks of unrest in the political order. In contrast, ‘high levels of faith’ in public officials, or one’s religion and/or religious officials, or one’s neighbors and community are all signs of prosperity and political stability.

Hobbes roundly condemns the authority of the Catholic Church. He maintains that if the Church had authority over ecclesiastical matters across Christendom, they would have control over secular matters as well. This not being the case, the bishops and ministers of the Church must be subject to the sovereign power of each of the political societies in which they are located. When this is not the case it means that sovereignty is divided and society is in a state of civil war “between the sword of justice, and the shield of faith” (Hobbes 1985, 499).⁹¹ Furthermore, beyond this entirely abstract description of religion’s role in the state, Hobbes maintains that public worship must be “*Uniforme*” (Hobbes 1985, 405). Again, the religious oath that guarantees the unity of the sovereign power demands a public conformity to the official practice of religion. The strong identification of religion with national culture in seventeenth

⁹¹ Hobbes’s demand that authority over public religious belief be placed in the hands of the sovereign has two principal targets: foreign authorities (such as the Pope), and local authorities (such as local preachers who introduced new interpretations of the Bible into their congregations). As Cavanaugh’s study of the ‘Creation Myth of the Wars of Religion’ shows, this was a common move by philosophers, who sought to place the blame for those wars on religious figures and set the state up as the authority that was best suited to end them. In fact, Cavanaugh argues, the state ought to be seen as a major participant in those conflicts, rather than as neutral arbiters capable of ending such divisions (Cavanaugh 2009).

century Europe *combined* with the subordination of the moral authority of the church to the monarch set the stage for the earliest nationalist conflicts.

To turn to his political theory, Hobbes held that the civil state is a mortal god, who serves under the immortal God. The civil state has overwhelming power to control its citizens. Second, it has no obligations to its citizens, even though they have obligations to it. Third, the civil state saves people from the imminent death lurking in the state of nature, just as God supposedly saves people from the death of sin. (Martinich 1992, 336).

From the preceding discussion, a number of things are evident. First, modern political theory made religion pivotally important in the construction of the state. The sovereign state appropriated moral, communal, financial, and institutional resources from the Catholic Church rather than doing away with them. Furthermore, natural law theory was understood as having the support of scripture and some of its features were derived from the authority of scripture. There was no sense of opposition between natural reason and scripture; religious rebellion against the sovereign was understood as stemming chiefly from people's incredulity and their lack of understanding of the laws of nature. Finally, the church maintained its transcendent moral authority, but became subordinate to the sovereign power of the state.

Sovereignty doctrine didn't only establish the sovereign monarchs as the highest political authorities. It also provided the basis for a secular international order based on agreements between states. The sovereign power, which was first established to end the anxiety felt in the state of nature, now exists in a world governed by other sovereign powers. Even as they sought to retain absolute, sovereign power within their own borders – states had prudential reasons to make and stand by their agreements with one another. However, the 'worldliness' of state interests put states in constant competition with each other. The anxiety that existed between individuals in the state of nature is then transposed to an international level and becomes both the

reason for agreements between states and reason to worry that such agreements can be broken at any time.

5. Sovereignty and International Law

While political philosophy dealt primarily with the nature of sovereignty in a relatively abstract sense, international legal theorists were required to constantly relate their theories to the actual treaties that were signed between states. As with the concept of sovereignty, upon which international law was to be based, the purpose of international law was the promotion of peace. However, since the sovereign was the artificial personality of the people with powers that could not be divided without the destruction of sovereignty itself, there was no sovereign to maintain the oaths between states. The artificial personalities of sovereign states remained in a state of nature relative to one another. This made signing treaties (which would become the basis for international law) an uncertain venture, as each state retained the sovereign prerogative to withdraw from such a treaty at any time.

Hugo Grotius and Francisco de Vitoria developed international law in a manner that replaced the international religious authority of the pope with a system of law that didn't adhere to a single confessional. For Vitoria, this was done with a view to protect the native inhabitants of the Americas who were being enslaved under the guise of religion by the Spanish. Grotius, on the other-hand, was deeply involved in the inter-European conflicts that were taking place during the height of the wars of religion. My goal here is to highlight the reconfiguration of violence from a social imaginary based on Latin-Christendom to one based on international law. I draw on recent scholarship by Antony Anghie to show how the rise of modern international law promoted Eurocentrism and imperialism. I will look at Grotius first, to demonstrate how secularism was meant to maintain order in a Europe that was normatively fractured. I will then look at Vitoria, to

show how this marked the transition from a religious world order to a European international order, rather than a genuinely pluralist one. This is important because if international law is premised on principles that are arbitrary or self-serving – then it loses the ‘neutrality’ that secular institutions espouse.

While the idea of an international society was hardly new, Grotius is credited with developing the form that modern international society took – one premised on the concepts of natural law and sovereignty. Grotius writes to us during the tumultuous period of the 30 Years War. Religious authority was hotly contested during this time, with Kings, Popes, and local ecclesiastical authorities all seeking to extend their moral sway over the faithful, as well as to capture the wealth that came along with such authority. Hobbes’s reinterpretation of natural law theory which placed power over religious doctrine firmly under the control of the commonwealth, but the notion that the public mode of worship received its sanction solely from the sovereign failed to solve the problem of international conflicts over religion. As with Hobbes, the law of nature’s requirement that we abide by our agreements provided the means to overcome the divisions between different confessionals. However, a key difference that sets Grotius apart in the development of secularism is that he maintains that this would “have a degree of validity even if we should concede that which cannot be conceded without the utmost wickedness: that there is no God, or that the affairs of men are of no concern to him” (Grotius 2012, 4).⁹² While Christianity continues to provide important lessons and backing for the sort of international community Grotius advocates, the source of the state’s power comes from the social nature of human beings, rather than from God as the guarantor of human fidelity. Grotius

⁹² Grotius is credited as saying: “etsi Deus non daretur..., even if God didn’t exist these norms would be binding on us (Grotius in Taylor 1998, 34).

thereby completes the transition from a Natural Law tradition that is couched firmly in a Christian Universe to one that is based on the social nature of human beings.

Grotius maintains that the *jus gentium* (law of nations) that exists between states derives its power from two places (Grotius 2012, 5-8). First, he argues that those who wage war with justice on their side are awarded a psychological strength that many historians credit with being the deciding factor in victory. Second, other states are less likely to ally themselves with you if you constantly break your agreements and show no respect for the rule of law. Unlike Hobbes, Grotius maintains that international law can be effective without an international sovereign, since the norms and expectations that states have of one another mitigate the uncertainty that exists in the state of nature. Just as the national who breaks the law for private advantage undercuts their own future security by undermining the authority of the state, “so the state which transgresses the laws of nature and of nations...cuts away also the bulwarks which safeguard its own future peace” (Grotius 2012, 6). Peace is effective insofar as the parties at peace believe they may be at a disadvantage in some future war. If a state has no fear whatsoever of future conflict (in their dealings with states that have far smaller populations and far less military strength), it has no reason to uphold its future promises. Despite the fact that Grotius maintains that the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor have no sovereign authority over the world, he does believe that Christians can legitimately form holy leagues to defend themselves.⁹³ It is even their duty to do

⁹³ Grotius notes that some give the right to declare war to the Holy Roman Empire for the sake of creating a universal empire. Three reasons are advanced for this: Bartolus argues that ‘Holy Roman Emperor’ is a sacred title that all must respect; Dante argues that universal empire would be beneficial to people; finally, it is sometimes argued that the Holy Roman Emperor inherited the lands once occupied by Rome. Grotius says the first claim is ‘absurd’, that the advantages of universal Empire are no greater than the disadvantages, and that the Roman Empire won its land by conquest and lost them thereby also, so it no longer has a right to them (Grotius 2012, 304-5). About the right of the Catholic Church, he notes “the right of judging possessed by the Apostles, even although it extended in its own way to earthly things, was of a heavenly nature, so to say, and not of earthly quality. [I]t was to be exercised indeed not by the sword and scourge but by the word of God enunciated in general terms and applied to particular conditions....” (Grotius 2012, 305).

so.⁹⁴ The common religion that Europeans have with one another becomes the basis of mutual respect and obligation between Christians, despite the denial that it is sufficient to establish the sovereignty of the Pope or the Holy Roman Emperor over other Christian nations. Key to the future development of secularism was Grotius's contention that the authority of the Apostles extended primarily to 'heavenly things' and that they lacked authority 'of an earthly quality' – and he attributes this limit to their authority to the fact that they used words rather than swords. The sovereign's authority over earthly things is attributed to military force rather than any notion of justice – whether divine or earthly. Furthermore, the division between heavenly and earthly powers becomes even more pronounced over time and is taken to be the key feature of secular societies.⁹⁵

Despite the different confessionals that warred against one another, intra-European agreement over different aspects of law became universalized to form the norms of international law – creating peace amongst the warring European powers. Converting foreign peoples to Christianity is no longer a just reason to wage war – so long as they hold some God or gods sacred and believe that their gods are concerned with the affairs of men (Grotius 2012, 289-91). The new importance of religion is in the common civilization it makes out of European states ("since all Christians are members of one body").⁹⁶ Christianity loses the transcendent character and the authority that it had in the natural law doctrine of Aquinas, but becomes a civilizational group tasked with protecting a common history. As with all theories of human nature, the one

⁹⁴ Christians have an obligation to support one another against the enemies of Christianity "since all Christians are members of one body, and are bidden to share one another's sufferings and misfortunes" (Grotius 2012, 235).

⁹⁵ The paradigmatic theorist of this division is John Locke, whose work I discuss in the next chapter.

⁹⁶ Recall the discussion of 'thick and thin' religions discussed by Sudipta Kaviraj in the previous chapter. Religion is delegitimized as a basis for conflict in the secular version of international law espoused by Grotius. However, a new 'thinner' version of religion is put forward in its place. A 'thin' version of Christianity seeks to establish civilizational bonds between states whose religions resemble one another, despite being importantly different in respect to certain features of their beliefs (e.g. the authority of the Pope).

Grotius develops is heavily conditioned by the historical context in which he writes. “History,” he states:

is useful in two ways: it supplies both illustrations and judgements. The illustrations have greater weight in proportion as they are taken from better times and better peoples; thus we have preferred ancient examples, Greek and Roman, to the rest. And judgements are not to be slighted, especially when they are in agreement with one another; for by such statements the existence of the law of nature, as we have said, is in a measure proved, and by no other means, in fact, is it possible to establish the law of nations (Grotius 2012, 15).

The world history that Grotius draws on is a European world history. Despite the success that it will have establishing peace within Europe with the treaty of Westphalia, it did very little to establish peace between Europe and its exterior. The regular appeals he makes to the convergence of legal judgement establishes European norms of jurisprudence as international norms. Gradually, an ethnically and historically constructed notion of ‘Europe’ emerges to eclipse the more religiously based social imaginary of ‘Latin-Christendom’. Religious traditions and norms based on church and family thereby give way to secular traditions and norms based on states and an international order that exists between states.

Unlike Hobbes, Grotius comes to the conclusion that sovereignty is in fact divisible. He gives examples of sovereignty divided: when a sovereign’s subjects maintain their own rights over certain sovereign prerogatives; when colonies are established that leave the mother-country in a superior position; when states are forced to pay tribute to one another; and when states enter into unequal alliances that place one in permanent subordination to the other. Edward Keene notes two themes in Grotius’s work that enabled and promoted colonialism – the divisibility of sovereign power and the right of individuals to appropriate ‘unoccupied’ lands (Keene 2002, 3). The divisibility of sovereignty allowed European states to appropriate the sovereign powers of non-European peoples. Europeans would travel where they wished and then prosecute brutal wars when they met with local hostility and resentment for their appropriation of resources.

Grotius continues in the line of Christian thinkers who argue in favor of ‘just war’ doctrine, maintaining that the history and traditions of the Catholic Church demonstrate the compatibility between Christian principles and war (despite noting some dissenting views). Since the power of the sovereign is based on their ability to wage war, and just war can only be waged in response to the violation of a right, establishing ‘who owns what’ becomes integral to the project of international law. In particular, the difference between sovereign right and private property is established. Grotius notes that “whoever has control over the lands and waters can by his order prohibit any person from taking wild animals, fish or birds, and thereby acquiring them” (Grotius 2012, 96). This is curious, as Grotius himself acknowledges, because it seems to limit the liberty that exists in the state of nature – but he maintains that municipal law can limit such liberties when they are the custom of the state. European property relations, which Grotius acknowledges are based solely in custom, are thereby foisted onto other cultures and the industrious management of resources becomes an acceptable reason to appropriate the sovereign powers of a people. It’s important to point out that despite the ‘rationalism’ in the Grotian system, it maintains certain arbitrary traditions as international norms on the sole basis that they have been widely accepted within Europe. Furthermore, since the original implementation of those norms served as the justification to colonize and then appropriate vast quantities of resources, which further enriched the ‘core’ states of the emerging international system, these norms have helped to impoverish colonized states of resources and destroy indigenous structures of governance that might have served as sovereign states in their own right (had their autonomy been accepted from the beginning).⁹⁷

⁹⁷ In addition to the creation of strong, centralized states, Wallerstein finds that the “territorial expansion of Europe hence was theoretically a key prerequisite to a solution for the ‘crisis of feudalism’. Without it, the European situation could well have collapsed into relative constant anarchy and further contraction” (Wallerstein 2011, 38).

To see the effect ‘secular’ international law had on non-Christian peoples, I turn to Francisco de Vitoria, who wrote a hundred years before Grotius. Vitoria, like Bartolomé de Las Casas, was motivated primarily by a concern with the plight of Native Americans under Spanish rule. The conquistadores had been given free-reign by the monarchs to extract as much wealth from the Americas as possible. Prior to Vitoria, the dominant understanding of international law gave the power to make decisions concerning the acquisition of lands outside of Latin Christendom to the Pope.⁹⁸ Vitoria roundly rejects this as a valid means to determine law. He argues that “The Pope is not civil or temporal lord of the whole world in the proper sense of the words ‘lordship’ and ‘civil power’” (Vitoria 1991, 260). Furthermore, Vitoria militates against the view that the natives lack ‘reason’ or ‘government’ and can therefore be conquered on those grounds. Since they have rationality, they are able to participate in the *jus gentium*. In this system, sovereignty is demonstrated by the indivisible right to wage war. The natives have government and therefore their sovereigns are capable of representing them and executing their obligations as to the *jus gentium*.

Antony Anghie has criticized Vitoria’s development of the *jus gentium* for foisting Spanish standards of international conduct on the Indian as a means of justifying the continuation of the Spanish conquest (Anghie 2005). While he is guilty of a certain amount of mischaracterization of Vitoria’s intent, his analysis of the effect that international law had on the natives is unmistakably correct.⁹⁹ His argument proceeds as follows. The *jus gentium* gives

⁹⁸ The lands claimed during the Crusades, for example, derived their legal validity from the Pope’s investiture, as did the division of the Americas between Spain and Portugal.

⁹⁹ Anghie lays much of the blame for the imperialist logic of international law on Vitoria’s shoulders, yet reading Vitoria gives the overwhelming impression that Vitoria’s intention was to use international law to secure rights for America’s indigenous peoples and prevent imperialism in the name of religion. Anghie’s focus is the way in which the arguments Vitoria used were implemented by European powers, which hoped to use the new system of secular international law to justify colonial expansion (legitimizing it in the eyes of other European powers). Vitoria attributes the right to property to non-Christians and rationality to indigenous peoples – the two means that had

certain universal rights to all nations, including: the right to travel peaceably, the right to trade peaceably, and the right to proselytize (Christianity – other religions are not mentioned). Anghie notes that since any attempt to stop Spanish incursions into the Americas violates this universal right, the Indians are subject to conquest in a just war waged by the Spanish. Anghie looks at three moves by Vitoria that accomplish this: positing the relationship between the Spanish and the Indian as one of difference; bridging the gap between the cultures through appeal to a *jus gentium*; and then effacing Indian difference through their subsumption by Spain through conquest. Secular international law seems to have done nothing to protect the indigenous peoples of the Americas (or many other parts of the world). Despite the Papal Bull *Sublimis Deus* in 1537 that declared the ‘Indians’ rational (and therefore not subject to slavery) and the New Laws of 1542 passed by Spain for the protection of the native peoples of the Americas – the lust for bullion and slave labour demanded by the increasingly powerful and centralized states of Europe meant that the zeal of the conquistadores was allowed to proceed unchecked. Thus, while Vitoria’s intentions may have been the recognition of ‘Indian’ sovereignty and a responsibility to enter into peaceable relations with them – his theory was used by states to make sovereignty doctrine the basis on which indigenous land was appropriated by the colonial powers. The ‘rights’ given to the ‘Indian’ by the Spanish crown served more to subordinate Spain’s new vassal subjects than to protect them from the iniquities of the conquistadores.

International law remains one of the major developments of secular politics. It has undoubtedly been of service in promoting international peace and cooperation (despite a number

hitherto justified colonization. Keene comments that: “Vitoria, however, left Europeans in the situation where they had to show such a degree of respect for other peoples’ sovereignty and property that, if taken seriously, it would imply handing back the lands the Spanish had conquered in the Americas and would have put a halt to earlier colonialism” (Keene 2002, 55). This is a better portrayal of Vitoria’s intention and more properly places the blame for international law’s colonial origins on the European powers that implemented those legal arrangements.

of spectacular failures). What is important here is that structuring international law on European norms and principles, while promoting peace between the sovereign powers in Europe by fostering a common normative order, actually promoted colonialism and domination abroad.¹⁰⁰ Secular traditions, like religious ones, are liable to corruption when they entrench the power of some and deny the rights of others. As I noted when discussing the ways in which Latin-Christendom promoted peace (and war), international law also structures violence in ways that simultaneously promote certain types of peace (e.g. between France and the Netherlands) while justifying some forms of violence (the colonization of the Americas). The naturalness of colonization runs deep, even in societies that have attempted to come to grips with it.¹⁰¹

6. The Westphalian Consensus and the Modern State

While the centralization and the development of a national consciousness preceded their theorization by the early modern political philosophers, the treaty of Westphalia gave practical import to the views that had been developing. A number of modern states had already developed a monopoly on force, but the Westphalian consensus meant that this monopoly was recognized by others. The rise of print culture enabled national consciousness to develop and allowed it to gradually efface local differences in dialect and custom. National identity was conceived in primarily religious terms. The principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* (whose kingdom, his religion) aligned both the secular and religious powers of the state under the monarch. Religion still

¹⁰⁰ Note, there is also a relationship between the local discontent felt by Europe's poor and active efforts at colonization. The most obvious examples of this are the prison colonies. Also, the need to increase the food supply was driven by Europe's growing population. This is not to say that Europe was a peaceful place at the time. However, as with my argument about the peace promotion of the Catholic Church (above), the new secular order managed to stifle some of the major conflicts between European sovereign powers.

¹⁰¹ A recent scandal occurred over a grade three workbook describing Canada's origins in the following terms: "When the European settlers first arrived, they needed land to live on. The First Nations peoples agreed to move to different areas to make room for the new settlements." A later passage describes the development of the reserve system: "The First Nations peoples moved to areas called reserves, where they could live undisturbed by the hustle and bustle of the settlers" (Lee-Shanok 2017).

influenced foreign policy, but was seen increasingly to be subject to the ‘domestic interests’ of states – which were understood in terms of their relative power to one another. This gave rise to the Machiavellian art of statecraft, wherein each state understood its purpose as being to maintain the security and wealth of its people. This mission was seen as coextensive with the monarch’s desire for personal wealth and prestige. Crusades were no longer called, but the importance of colonization increased. Colonization became the defining characteristic of the dominant European powers relative to the rest of the world. Societies that didn’t possess a minimum amount of military power relative to the newly emerging European states were not considered sovereign and therefore had none of the rights of sovereignty.

Violence was reorganized in a number of ways following the Treaty of Westphalia. First, there was no super-sovereign power to settle disputes. Since the wars of religion were, in part, fought over the power of the Pope relative to Christendom, the Pope was not in a position to negotiate an end to hostilities – this power was given to each individual state. While the personal identification of the prince with the state lost power, a transcendent notion of the sovereign gradually took its place. The transcendent authority of the ‘nation’ replaced the transcendent moral authority of the church. At first this was done in predominantly religious terms (such as the divine right of kings), but gradually religious signifiers gave way to nationalist ones.¹⁰² This is not to say that nationalist signifiers are the same as religious ones – they’re different in a number of ways – but when secularists display a distrust of religious symbols and communities they ought to be mindful of the symbols and communities that secular life has given rise to.

¹⁰² Spain’s monarchs utilized their status as ‘most Holy Catholic majesties’ to justify their conquest of Granada and the New World, as well as to seize the property of Jews and *conversos*. England appropriated huge amounts of the church’s wealth for the monarchy under Henry VIII and put the control of religion firmly under the control of the crown. The existence of the Dutch Republic was premised almost entirely on their religious difference with Spanish Catholics. It is not that religion became unimportant in Europe, but the way in which authority and identity were understood and acted upon underwent dramatic changes.

Secularism has involved the state in more of our everyday lives, even as it has marginalized the role that religion plays in those lives.

The stakes of political atrocities were also raised with the rise of the modern state. Technology, bureaucratization, and a monopoly on force mean that the modern state is able to persecute minorities and foreigners more effectively than ever before. Newell sees the rise of modern politics, beginning with Machiavelli and transmitted into liberalism through Hobbes, as radically altering the nature of tyranny. While classical tyranny proceeded from a tyrant's unrestrained pursuit of pleasure, modern tyranny seeks "an impersonal, self-abnegating, and therefore seemingly 'idealistic' destruction of all premodern ties to family, class, and region in the name of a contentless vision of unified community or state" (Newell 2005, 141). The millenarian content of Christianity is put into the service of humanity through the doctrine of revolution – wherein a better future (whether nationalist, liberal, or communist) is promised to reform society and establish the City of Heaven on earth. For Newell, this creates the conditions for modern genocide, as the goal of the revolution takes precedence over the lives of the citizens. This remains a possibility both for religious and secular nationalists and will be more fully examined in the next chapter.

7. Conclusion

I set out to note some of the differences and continuities between the modern secular and the medieval religious political imaginaries. My goal was to examine the role the Catholic Church played in both promoting peace and in directing violence and to note the relatively analogous ways in which the secular system did the same. While the Catholic Church used the Crusades to expand its territorial reach and the inquisition to maintain its internal authority, the sovereign state was driven to colonialism to expand its territory and violent ethnic conflicts to

establish a national character for the state. Many of the lines between ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ violence are blurred during this transition, as religious institutions struggled to maintain their independence from (and sometimes control over) secular ones, even as secular institutions increasingly appropriated the old resources of the religious establishment. Both religion and the sovereign state foster group cohesion and make claims on peoples’ loyalty, which set the stage for the violent conflicts during the Wars of Religion. It has also created the conditions for many contemporary conflicts between religious believers and the state, as religious authority has surged in a number of places even as the political legitimacy of the secular state has come into question.

This transition is also significant for political philosophy as many of the key metaphors used by early modern philosophers were thoroughly religious. Machiavelli is famous for his development of the concept of nationalism, despite the fact that this is a term he never uses. Religion is the primary concept he uses to explain the psychological unity displayed in successful states – whereas ‘corrupt religion’ is the metaphor he uses to explain the divisions that plagued Italy. Religion was not good or bad depending on its type (he notes the good and bad uses of both the Roman and Christian religions), but depends rather on the use to which it is put. In a similar vein, Hobbes clearly likens the unitary nature of the state to the unitary nature of God. In doing so he created a metaphor for the absolute power of the state, which liberalism has had great trouble shaking off.¹⁰³ In this, the state has developed formidable powers to maintain the rule of law and the security of its subjects – while also creating the conditions that allow the state to persecute political minorities and prosecute foreign wars more effectively.

¹⁰³ I’ll discuss the ways in which liberalism has attempted to mitigate the absolute power of the state in chapter four.

The newly centralized states of early-modern Europe used the national religion to unify and homogenize the beliefs of the people. Natural law's evaluation of religion, however, didn't see any particular confession as more virtuous than any other (notwithstanding a cultural preference for Christianity). Instead, it was the use to which religion might be put that motivated Machiavelli and Hobbes. As time went on, the state found new ways of managing minority religions (or majority religions in some colonies). In the next chapter, I detail the different models of secularism that developed over time. Different secular states, I will show, adopted different attitudes towards religion and religious difference. While contemporary secular states avail themselves of a number of different policy options to manage the religious beliefs of their citizens, the role of the state as the ultimate arbiter in determining tolerable religious practice owes its origins to Hobbes's reformulation of natural law theory.

The revaluation of desire was one of the key differences between medieval and modern political philosophy. Rather than seeing politics as the means by which desire is subordinated, modern political philosophy sees desire as the chief driving force behind progress. While the state Hobbes envisions is absolute, the right to rebellion that is often read into his work is taken up by liberals and communists alike and becomes the foundational principle of modern revolutions. There is something very 'religious' about every group that attempts to capture state power to reform society, as well as something very secular. We see the religious in the emotional appeals that must be made in any election campaign that seeks major change (e.g. Yes we can!), while we see the secular in the new use of technology, bureaucracy, and industry used by the most theocratic states on the planet (e.g. Saudi Arabia and Iran are both members of OPEC). I will explore these connections in the final two chapters.

Finally, the legacy of the Westphalian consensus has led to the development of doctrines that simultaneously maintain the historical legality of colonialism, while rejecting it as a principle of justice. Since all the nations of the world are part of a single international community, no country has the right to invade any other. Yet that community was not founded on universal principles, but was based on a European consensus. Since recognition was the basis for membership in the ‘international community’ and the original members of the *jus gentium* were all European (in practice, if not in theory) – European states were able to parlay recognition into advantageous international agreements. The order in which states were recognized by the *jus gentium* continues to have very real effects on colonized peoples and challenges to the international system are inevitable as long as people experience the established order as unfairly imposed and not representative of their values.

IV. Secular Ideologies

In the last chapter I examined sovereignty doctrine and its role in the development of secular natural law theories. I disputed Charles Taylor's portrayal of this secular international order as one that promoted peace, pointing out that it encouraged orthodoxy at home and colonialism abroad. Here, I expand on my critique of the liberal democratic portrayal that Taylor gives to the social imaginary of our 'secular age'. In contrast to the "verticality" and personal relations ingrained in the social imaginary of Latin-Christendom, Taylor stresses the horizontal nature of "direct-access society" (Taylor 2007).¹⁰⁴ Taylor describes the rise of a "modern moral order" as a key feature of this society.¹⁰⁵ While I believe Taylor is broadly correct in his description of the moral order required for modern secular living, I find his focus on the principled nature of the modern moral order too narrow. Often, modern political beliefs have tended to take the form of ideology, rather than of abstract moral principles. Modern conditions put us into imagined communities that are much less personal and secular ideologies provide us with ideas about how those communities ought to be governed, but the violent conflicts between adherents of different ideologies and the tendency of nationalist movements to persecute and exclude should be recognized as core features of our secular age. I argue that recognizing these

¹⁰⁴ "There was thus a certain 'verticality' of society [in Latin-Christendom], which depended on a grounding in higher time, and which has disappeared in modern society. But this was also, seen from another angle, a society of mediated access.earlier hierarchical societies tended to personalize relations of power and subordination. The principle of a modern horizontal society is radically different. Each of us is equidistant from the centre, we are immediate to the whole. This describes what we could call a 'direct-access' society. We have moved from a hierarchical order of personalized links to an impersonal egalitarian one; from a vertical world of mediated-access to horizontal, direct-access societies" (Taylor 2007, 209).

¹⁰⁵ "Starting from the seventeenth century, this idea has come more and more to dominate our political thinking, and the way we imagine our society. It starts off in Grotius' version as a theory of what political society is, that is, what it is in aid of, and how it comes to be. But any theory of this kind also offers inescapably an idea of moral order. It tells us something about how we ought to live together in society" (Taylor 2007, 159).

more negative features of contemporary secularism helps to explain many people's reliance on older, religious communities.

To demonstrate this, I examine attempts by nationalist and ideological movements to establish societies based on secular values, and show that these movements, while serving to marginalize the force of religion in politics, did not lead to a decrease in political violence. On the contrary, the enormous power exercised by sovereign states meant that the stakes were higher in struggles for state power – provoking intense conflict amongst the different ideological factions. Liberalism and communism each seek to organize society according to a set of ideals that are meant to be rationally defensible and universally applicable. However, I argue that the universal forms of modern politics based in liberalism and communism tend to take on the national character of the state in which they are practiced. Nationalism, like religion, captures peoples' imaginations and creates new communities that see the interests of the state above their own. Marx was highly critical of this form of nationalism and yet the communist parties that have attempted to use the state to reform society have readily endorsed it in various forms. When these regimes failed to deliver on their promises to the people, they found themselves opposed by the religious groups they'd sought to marginalize. When such states lost their legitimacy, religious institutions and communities were there to fill the political vacuum. I argue that religion's resurgence today has less to do with religion than with the failures of secular political ideologies: their inability to resolve the tension between unified state interests and individual citizen interests, their tendency to focus on territory, security and economy, and their failure to construct a vital social imaginary that speaks to a theological-political desire to belong.

1. The Modern Moral Order

Taylor describes what he calls the ‘modern moral order’ as the enshrinement of three principles: “1) the rights and liberties of the members, 2) the equality among them (which has of course been variously interpreted, and has mutated towards more radical conceptions over time), and 3) the principle that rule is based on consent (which has also been defended in more and less radical forms)” (Taylor 2014, 69). He takes a somewhat rosy view of this modern moral order, which he states is captured by the ideas of “(1) human rights, (2) equality and non-discrimination, and (3) democracy” (ibid.). He describes it as having arisen amongst elites before being disseminated to the mass of society and he does note that the implementation of this order involved a certain amount of violence and resistance.¹⁰⁶ An important feature of this new order is the universal character that Grotius imparts to it. In seeking to base the order on principles that were neither particular to any religion nor to any particular state, Grotius sought to articulate an international political order capable of governing all states.¹⁰⁷ For doing this, Taylor (1998) credits Grotius with developing an independent ethic capable of overcoming the confessional allegiances that were used to justify the Wars of Religion.

For Taylor, a key feature of the independent ethic that Grotius developed was its immanence. In contrast to the transcendent, cosmic order that he associates with Latin-

¹⁰⁶ Taylor notes that: “from the late Renaissance, we find a growing split. We might say a kind of secession of the élites from popular culture; be it the devotion to images in the religious sphere, or Carnival and popular amusements. This secession marks the development of élite ideals of life which are seen as incompatible with much of popular culture, ideals of piety in the religious sphere, and of ‘civility’ in the secular domain. This secession doesn’t remain at that stage, but is the basis for the attempt to remake society, the active re-ordering of mass life, which has had such fateful consequences” (Taylor 2007, 87).

¹⁰⁷ Alexander Kojève sees the establishment of a universal and homogenous state as the modern goal of politics. He sees the origin of the universal state in Alexander the Great’s idea of empire, “at least in the sense that the state had no a priori given limits (geographic, ethnic, or otherwise), no pre-established ‘capital,’ nor even a geographically fixed center destined to exercise political dominion over its periphery” (Kojève 2000, 170). In contrast to Kojève, who saw emerging trans-national governing bodies like the United Nations and the European Union as representative of the modern world order, Grotius sees this order as established by the agreements made between independent, sovereign states.

Christendom, natural law theory placed political authority in human societies themselves. Taylor emphasizes “the requirement that political society be founded on the consent of those bound by it” (Taylor 2007, 188). Despite the fact that Grotius and Hobbes emphasized the non-democratic nature of sovereignty, Taylor takes democracy to be central to the spirit of ‘popular sovereignty’ – and sees Locke as the key figure in the connection between sovereignty and rule by consent.¹⁰⁸ While the power of the sovereign is based on the people, the nature of sovereignty means that the varied interests of the people must be expressed as a singular state interest by the command of the sovereign. There is a tension between the unification of a people by a sovereign power and the individual interests of those people. Mass coalitions of people replaced the system of family alliances that characterized medieval political life, and politics became increasingly about mobilizing people’s fears and desires on a large scale rather than coordinating personal alliances. Since coordinating the interests of so many people was difficult, princes turned to mystical notions of unity based in nationalism and religion.¹⁰⁹ For those excluded from this unity the mobilization of a national consciousness increased their vulnerability. Thus, *popular sovereignty has both increased the people’s ability to self-govern and made them vulnerable to the reformist efforts of others.*

¹⁰⁸ Grotius maintains that “the opinion of those must be rejected who hold that everywhere and without exception sovereignty resides in the people, so that it is permissible for the people to restrain and punish kings whenever they make a bad use of their power” (Grotius 2012, 51). Stephen C. Neff, commenting on this section, notes that Grotius generally accepts that the people are the ‘ultimate source’ of sovereign power, but insists that the people do not have a right to withdraw sovereignty once it has been conferred. He cites conquest as a legitimate means of acquiring sovereignty (when done in accordance with the law of war). Taylor acknowledges that Grotius’s conception of sovereignty remains hierarchically based and that it is somewhat anachronistic to explain it as a transitional point on the path to ‘rule based on consent’. However, he argues that: “As it developed from its Lockean version, the Natural Law theory took a very different direction. This theory, of course, had, and needed, a voluntarist side stressing the power of reconstruction; but it also needed a notion of normative order to set the rules and the goals for this reconstruction. The crucial concepts defining this are not hierarchy and command. The starting point is rather a race of equal individuals designed to enter with each other into a society of mutual benefit” (Taylor 2007, 128-9).

¹⁰⁹ For Machiavelli, overcoming this tension was the chief function of religion. The private interests of individuals are always capable of tempting them to abandon the public interest. Since religion was a form of mystification, it was always in danger of corruption, but it remained necessary as a means of achieving this unity. See chapter three for further discussion.

Casanova notes that many Europeans who believe that religion is a harmful force in the world often turn to the seventeenth century Wars of Religion to justify their position. More recent history gives us reason to question how much religion drives intolerance and how well secular moral principles function to help us avoid such violence. Casanova comments that:

The European short century, from 1914 to 1989, using Eric Hobsbawm's (1996) apt characterization, was indeed one of the most violent, bloody, and genocidal centuries in the history of humanity. But none of the horrible massacres - neither the senseless slaughter of millions of young Europeans in the trenches of World War I; nor the countless millions of victims of Bolshevik and communist terror through the Russian Revolution, Civil War, collectivization campaigns, the Great Famine in Ukraine, the repeated cycles of Stalinist terror and the Gulag; nor the most unfathomable of all, the Nazi Holocaust and the global conflagration of World War II, culminating in the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki - none of those terrible conflicts can be said to have been caused by religious fanaticism and intolerance. All of them were rather the product of modern secular ideologies (Casanova 2016, 1059-60).

Taylor's praise of Grotius' new order ending religious war seems specious when viewed in this context.

The transition from a politics based on religious affiliation to one based on secular ideologies does not necessarily lead to a decrease in violence in the world. It seems that, without religious justifications, humanity continues to find reasons for war; we begin to argue over secular issues of authority such as territory, security, the ethnic character of the state, the proper way to regulate the economy, or which political party has the best vision of the future. Moreover, in looking at the ways in which secular political ideas motivated and justified the conflicts Casanova describes, we see the Janus face of Taylor's modern moral order. In the last chapter, I stated that I disagreed with Newell's characterization of modern (Machiavellian) politics because he placed too much emphasis on the possibility for genocide and totalitarianism.¹¹⁰ My critique of Taylor, conversely, is that he doesn't emphasize this enough. The conflicts described by

¹¹⁰ See chapter three, note 77.

Casanova are related to secular ways of organizing politics, but they seem at odds with the principles that Taylor describes. Taylor's mistake, I believe, is that he digs through the developments that led to secularism for the best philosophical principles behind it, whereas (as Taylor himself notes) the notion of a 'social imaginary' does away with the close connection between theory and lived, political reality.¹¹¹ Taylor's description of the secular social imaginary based on rights, equality, and consent, accurately depicts his own hopes for society, but it is by no means reflective of the breadth of modern secular politics – which includes states outside of the North-Atlantic context he examines.¹¹² China, for example, is certainly a secular state that has developed a secular political morality – but Chinese political culture interprets the language of rights, rule by consent, and equality amongst its citizens in very different ways from Taylor's characterization of them. This is not to say that China lacks secular, normative principles. The Chinese government's emphasis on economic development, industrialization, national unity (including Taiwan and Tibet), and the state's adoption of atheism as the official state belief make it both very modern and very secular. Yet Taylor tends to emphasize the tendency of the modern moral order to produce demonstrations like Tiananmen Square, rather than events like the Cultural Revolution. Capturing the modern tendency for both of these types of events is important for a complete picture of modern, secular politics.

¹¹¹ See chapter three for a definition and discussion of social imaginaries. Taylor emphasizes the differences between theory and social imaginary: "There are in fact several differences. I speak of 'imaginary' (1) because I'm talking about the way ordinary people 'imagine' their social surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms but carried in images, stories, legends, etc. But it is also the case that (2) theory is often the possession of a small minority, whereas what is interesting in the social imaginary is that it is shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society. Which leads to a third difference: (3) the social imaginary is that common understanding which makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy" (Taylor 2010, 308).

¹¹² In a follow-up to *A Secular Age* (2007), Taylor (2010) acknowledges this criticism. "There should have been lots more chapters, describing regions and times that I have left relatively neglected. Above all, I have neglected the way in which Western understandings of religion were informed through the precolonial and then the colonial encounter with other parts of the world" (Taylor 2010, 301).

Taylor's insights into the modern moral order are useful to understanding the intersection of politics and religion that it is worth maintaining his overall framework, even as we adjust his principles to better capture the breadth of secular politics. Therefore, I propose two adjustments to Taylor's modern moral order that I believe remain faithful to his overall framework, but better capture the breadth of secular politics.

First, I choose to adopt the term 'ideology' as opposed to Taylor's 'modern moral order' because it carries less of the connotations of an abstract, theoretically robust set of principles. I define ideology as *a group's organized attempts to use state power to reform society to better cohere to some theoretical ideal*. This definition captures a number of the features that John Gerring (1997) argues are needed for a useful definition of the term.¹¹³ It contains the core features of the term, which Gerring identifies as "coherence", "contrast and stability" – which is to say that the 'theoretical ideal' links together "a set of idea-elements" in a way that isn't random, these elements can be contrasted with other sets, and there is a certain stability to them over time (Gerring 1997, 980). This definition can also be used to differentiate the term 'ideology' from other related terms.¹¹⁴ The fact that it is 'a group's organized attempt to reform

¹¹³ Gerring cites thirteen definitions of ideology and notes that: "not only is ideology farflung, it also encompasses a good many definitional traits which are directly at odds with one another" (Gerring 1997, 957). A contrast between two definitions of ideology that he cites are helpful to point out the poles that I hope to navigate between with my definition. First, "A logically coherent system of symbols which, within a more or less sophisticated conception of history, links the cognitive and evaluative perception of ones social condition- especially its prospects for the future- to a program of collective action for the maintenance, alteration, or transformation of society" (Mullins 1974: 235). Second: "An emotion-laden, myth-saturated, action-related system of beliefs and values about people and society, legitimacy and authority, that is acquired to a large extent as a matter of faith and habit. The myths and values of ideology are communicated through symbols in a simplified, economical, and efficient manner. Ideological beliefs are more or less coherent, more or less articulate, more or less open to new evidence and information. Ideologies have a high potential for mass mobilization, manipulation, and control; in that sense, they are mobilized belief systems" (Rejai 1991: 11).

¹¹⁴ Following Giovanni Sartori, Gerring's second criteria for a good definition of ideology is that one differentiate it from other terms. "On grounds of achieving maximum clarity, one ought to seek out attributes that effectively differentiate ideology from neighboring terms. From this perspective it is indeed useful to limit the purview of ideology to explicitly *political* subject matter" (Gerring 1997, 982). He also argues that, since words like "domination", "repression", and "hegemony" already exist – interpreting ideology in more neutral terms allows greater precision in discussing the particular features of ideology that one wants to emphasize.

society’ makes it explicitly political and separates it from terms such as “worldview, belief-system, cultural system, value-system, and other like terms” (Gerring 1997, 982). Finally, Gerring acknowledges that every scholarly use of the term ideology must accept some context-specificity.¹¹⁵ I focus on ‘state power’ since my examination of ideology is conducted in relation to a study of political secularism and the key theoretical development behind political secularism is the concept of sovereignty.

In thinking of secular politics in terms of ideology, I have not departed from Taylor’s approach of examining broad social changes in terms of ‘social imaginaries’ rather than ‘social theory’. Taylor acknowledges that “this process [of reform] isn’t just one sided, a theory making over a social imaginary. The theory, in coming to make sense of the action, is ‘glossed’, as it were, given a particular shape as the context of these practices” (Taylor 2010, 313). Social theory is able to insulate itself from ongoing political struggles by wrapping itself in a certain amount of abstraction, whereas political ideologies are actively caught up in the implementation of policy in specific social contexts.¹¹⁶ I take this capacity of context to shape theory more seriously than Taylor because I am more concerned with political movements while Taylor is concerned with broad, existential transformation. Liberal and communist political parties are sometimes forced to choose between principles and pragmatism, between getting elected and delivering on their promises, or between operating within the political system and overthrowing it. Furthermore, individuals are often swayed by their sense of group membership to support an ideology on the

¹¹⁵ According to Gerring: “it is not reasonable to try to construct a single, all-purpose definition of ideology, usable for all times, places, and purposes. Doing so would deprive the concept of its utility precisely because its utility is (usually) context-specific” (Gerring 1997, 983).

¹¹⁶ Taylor notes that in both the French and American revolutions “there was some awareness of the historical primacy of theory, which is central to the modern idea of ‘revolution’, whereby we set out to remake our political life according to agreed principles. This constructivism has become a central feature of modern political culture” (Taylor 2010, 313).

basis of association more than abstract principle, which sometimes causes groups to pursue sub-optimal strategies of social reform.¹¹⁷ Ideologies are expected to morph in response to context in a way that the “modern moral order” is not.

The second adjustment I propose is to reformulate the secular principles that Taylor lays out, (based on rights, equality, and rule based on consent) into the slogan of the French Revolution 'liberté, égalité, fraternité'. These terms mirror Taylor's principles of the modern moral order, but highlight their connection with the ideological movements that became defining features of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Furthermore, self-rule as an ideology and lived practice, rather than as a principle, is frequently expressed in nationalist terms rather than in terms of the democratic process or interests. Nationalism has a tendency to creep into active secular politics, and the 'fraternité' slogan, with its Napoleonic associations, is a useful reminder of that. In order to discuss the major ideological movements that characterized the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we must clearly grasp the difference between democratic self-rule and the notion of nationalist solidarity that is captured in the term 'fraternité'. Democracy functions in terms of interests, whereas nationalism seeks to bypass the particular interests of private individuals in favor of solidarity. Machiavelli and Hobbes both tended to champion solidarity, as captured in the concept of sovereignty (or the person of the prince), to be more important than the perceived interests of individuals. For Hobbes, the entire point of the sovereign state was for each person to give up their right to all things so that each had as much freedom as was

¹¹⁷ A recent study on the effect that ideology has on reasoning found that ideology does tend to corrupt how we interpret even empirical evidence. Furthermore, it found that: “When societal risks become suffused with antagonistic social meanings, it is (often if not always, and with respect to many if not all issues) *individually rational* for ordinary members of the public to attend to information in a manner that reliably connects them to the positions that predominate in their identity-defining groups. Nevertheless, if ideologically diverse individuals all follow this strategy simultaneously, *they will be collectively worse off*, since under these conditions, democratic institutions are less likely to converge, or to converge as rapidly as they otherwise would, on policies that reflect the best available evidence on how to protect everyone from harm” (Kahan 2013, 420).

compatible with the freedom of others (Hobbes 1985). Marx and Spinoza both saw democracy as the best form of constitution and deplored the nationalist and religious struggles that were the results of religious or ideological mystification.¹¹⁸ However, democracy, in the Marxist and Spinozist sense, requires a certain amount of abstraction. For Marx, as I will discuss in greater detail below, the *real* interests of people were the goal of democracy, not their perceived interests. This should not be mistaken for a normative argument in favor of nationalism over democracy. Rather, it is a descriptive argument that nationalism captures a broader set of phenomena than democracy.

2. Secular Ideologies

Now that I have reformulated my critical language from ‘the modern moral order’ to *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, it is easier to see how this moral order maps onto the three major ideological movements of the 20th century: liberalism, communism and nationalism. Modernity creates the conditions for ideology to dominate the language of political conflict in much the same way as religion dominated the language of political conflict in seventeenth century Europe. The intense, emotional appeal of ideology in the twentieth century lent the ‘aroma’ of religion to such beliefs, to borrow a phrase from Marx. The features of these modern secular ideologies have become so natural and yet, when given the chance to exercise power, have been the cause for so much conflict. *Liberté* co-habits with liberal-capitalism, *égalité* with communism, and *fraternité*, as mentioned, with nationalism. The principles behind these ideologies are capable of

¹¹⁸ For Spinoza: “In a democratic state (which is the one closest to a state of nature), all men agree, as we have shown above, to act – but not to judge or think – according to the common decision. That is, because people cannot all have the same opinions, they have agreed that the view which gains the most votes should acquire the force of a decision, reserving always the right to recall their decision whenever they should find a better course” (Spinoza 2007, 257). For Marx: “In democracy, the constitution, the law, the state, so far as it is political constitution, is itself only a self-determination of the people, and a determinate content of the people. Furthermore it is evident that all forms of the state have democracy for their truth, and for that reason are false to the extent that they are not democracy” (Marx 2012(1843), 33)

mutual compromise (all three remain the national motto of France), but the tensions that exist between them do cause states to emphasize certain principles over others at various times. Most obviously, the right to private property espoused by liberal-capitalists has come into conflict with the equality between citizens emphasized by communist states. As with religious conflicts in the seventeenth century, I don't believe there is anything inherent in the *beliefs* motivating these ideological groups that has provoked the conflicts that Casanova describes. It is humanity's tendency to forge groups on the basis of belief and to emphasize the differences between those groups that creates the possibility for politically explosive results, regardless of the content of those beliefs.

In chapter three, I argued that a revaluation of desire by political philosophers was key to the development of secularism. In medieval political philosophy, desire was something that had to be suppressed – primarily through the good example set by religious figures and the promotion of strict adherence to Catholic doctrine. Modern political philosophers such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Spinoza held that instead of being dangerous, desire could be used to provide stability to the political order. The economy therefore became the most important secular concern for the modern state. Religion was undermined as a worthy or valid reason for conflict and the distribution of economic goods increasingly became the primary basis for political society. Over time, different theories about the most equitable relationship between the state and the economy coalesced into two camps – liberalism and communism.¹¹⁹ Their political development has been the cause of considerable conflict and bloodshed, though we need not think of this as the inevitable result of their theoretical ideals.

¹¹⁹ I am, of course, ignoring a broad swath of intermediate positions and political parties that did find a compromise between these ideologies. The reason I have chosen to focus on liberalism and communism is that these are the most systematic treatments of the secular principles of liberty and equality respectively. I note that these principles are not mutually exclusive, nor is it impossible to strike an appropriate balance between them.

I turn now to a discussion of why nationalism should be discussed as if it sits in the same category as liberalism and communism. Benedict Anderson (2006) presents several problems to placing nationalism in the same category as ideologies like liberalism or communism. He gives three reasons for this:

(1) The objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists. (2) The formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept...vs. the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations, such that, by definition, 'Greek' nationality is *sui generis*. (3) The 'political' power of nationalisms vs. their philosophical poverty and even incoherence....unlike most other isms, nationalism has never produced its own grand thinkers: no Hobbeses, Tocquevilles, Marxes, or Webers (Anderson 2006, 5).

All three of these characteristics make nationalism more similar to religion than to the other ideologies examined here. Like many religions, nationalisms project themselves backwards through history, prior to their founding.¹²⁰ Nationalism, like religion, has been subject to the criticism that it tends to discriminate against out-group members, even as it provides the basis for in-group solidarity. Finally, the ideals that nationalism hopes to use to unite society are less philosophical in nature than those of the other ideologies examined here. Literature, language, and a history of collective struggle (such as foreign and civil wars) are more important to nationalist projects than philosophical arguments. In fact, Anderson has written that nationalism is more properly categorized with 'kinship' and 'religion', than ideologies like 'liberalism' or 'fascism'. There are good analytical reasons for such a distinction, when each of these ideologies is studied independently. However, what interests me in these ideologies is the way in which they provided a political ethic that was independent of religion and since nationalism is similar to

¹²⁰ For example, American history books begin long before the founding of the country in 1776. Moreover, the tendency to begin American history lessons in Europe make America's origins somewhat 'mystical' in nature.

liberalism and communism in that they are all political projects that hope to transform society via a secular set of political relations that is independent from religion, I accord it the same attention.

Again, I want to emphasize that I find Taylor's overall framework convincing – but seek a more expansive notion of the political principles that have come to characterize our secular age. The account offered here aims to look at how secularism has spread across the world – rather than seeing it as a phenomenon that originated and remained largely confined to North Atlantic civilization, which is Taylor's focus. This account focuses more on the conflicts between different secular ideologies rather than how they provided an independent ethic capable of ending religious conflicts. Despite the theoretical claims of modern, secular beliefs, proponents of secular ideologies have managed to be just as violent as religious believers. They have framed their conflicts as battles between good and evil, nationals and foreigners, civilized and barbarians, or the proletariat and their exploiters. Yet, like the pitched battles between Protestants and Catholics, many of these conflicts seem unwarranted to those not living in their midst. I also examine the way in which secularism was implemented and both resisted and adopted in colonial contexts. This will help to explain the resurgence of religion as a force in modern political conflicts as well as contextualize the fear that more secular societies have of this resurgence.

2.1 Liberalism.

In this section, I begin with an examination of the principle of 'overlapping consensus', which John Rawls believed to be capable of structuring society in a way that avoids a commitment to any comprehensive belief system. I critique the idea of 'overlapping consensus' with one of Rawls's own worries – that such a system has the potential to fall into a mere 'modus vivendi', a way of living that only holds until one comprehensive doctrine is able to take power.

I then look at the historical development of liberalism and note that it has never achieved the type of overlapping consensus envisioned by Rawls. Instead, liberal ideology has championed the idea of freedom for the sufficiently civilized and imperialism for the rest. It is this double standard that has made religious nationalist projects more popular than the corrupt, post-colonial governments they are beginning to challenge.

It is worth noting at the outset that Rawls is not a political scientist hoping to empirically explain or predict the course of global events. He is an ideal theorist who hopes to develop principles according to which we might establish a just political society.¹²¹ However, there is a change in his views between when he wrote *A Theory of Justice* (1971) and *Political Liberalism* (1993). Rawls notes that in *Theory*, no distinction is drawn between “a moral doctrine of justice” and “a strictly political conception of justice” (Rawls 2005(1993), xv). In the third part of *Theory*, Rawls gives an account of how political stability might be achieved, which he later finds to be inconsistent with the moral focus of the rest of the work. In part, he finds that this is because he endorsed what he calls a “comprehensive view” – justice as fairness – which he expects the citizens of the well-ordered society to embrace. “Now the serious problem is this. A modern democratic society is characterized not simply by a pluralism of comprehensive religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines but by a pluralism of incompatible yet reasonable comprehensive doctrines” (Rawls 2005(1993), xvi). By shifting his focus from a moral conception of the well-ordered society, which asks citizens to adopt justice as fairness as a comprehensive doctrine, to a political conception of the well-ordered society – he attempts to address “the problem of stability” which is “fundamental to political philosophy” (Rawls

¹²¹ “For us the primary subject of justice is the basic structure of society, or more exactly, the way in which the major social institutions distribute the fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation” (Rawls 1999(1971), 7).

2005(1993), xvii). My criticism is that by focusing on the issues of stability and the empirical fact of incompatible comprehensive doctrines, he has departed from the idealism of his project in *Theory* and therefore exposes himself to the criticism that he has taken insufficient account of the forces at play in the formation of political communities. This doesn't mean that *Political Liberalism* is useless, but that its goal of providing the basic structure for a political society, even "under the best of foreseeable conditions" (Rawls 2005(1993), xvii), either requires a better account of these forces – or will exist always as an ideal and never be realized.

One of the major virtues of Rawls' *Political Liberalism* is that it takes the conditions of modern pluralism seriously. Since pluralistic societies must find a way of making political decisions that are not based on any one group's "comprehensive view" of the world, politics ought to be conducted in a manner that is neutral towards the comprehensive doctrines of its members.¹²² When a society is religiously diverse, each group wants to avoid having the state regulate their religious lives.¹²³ Moreover, if a religion receives public recognition from the state, it turns the public religion into an object that can be fought over by different religious groups. According to Rawls, state unity and authority are therefore best protected by guaranteeing a space for private worship, while constitutionally keeping religion out of the public sphere –

¹²² Rawls describes the motivation for the idea of an 'overlapping consensus' in the following terms: "We try, so far as we can, neither to assert nor to deny any particular comprehensive religious, philosophical, or moral view, or its associated theory of truth and the status of values. Since we assume each citizen to affirm some such view, we hope to make it possible for all to accept the political conception as true or reasonable from the standpoint of their own comprehensive view, whatever that may be. Properly understood, then, a political conception of justice need be no more indifferent, say, to truth in philosophy and morals than the principle of toleration, suitably understood, need be indifferent to truth in religion. Since we seek an agreed basis of public justification in matters of justice, and since no political agreement on those disputed questions can reasonably be expected, we turn instead to the fundamental ideas we seem to share through the public political culture" (Rawls 2005(1993), 150).

¹²³ Note that, under Rawls's conception of overlapping consensus, comprehensive moral and philosophical doctrines are also barred from establishment. "In this model case the religious doctrine and the liberalisms of Kant and Mill are taken to be general and comprehensive" (Rawls 2005(1993), 145). Like the Catholic and the Lutheran, neither the capitalist nor the Marxist may establish their comprehensive doctrine as the official doctrine of the state.

except in the form of values. For Rawls, these values are based on principles that various religious and non-religious people will accept as reasonable, if not outright true.

Rawls anticipates an important objection to the idea of overlapping consensus – that it “abandons the hope of political community and settles instead for a public understanding that is at bottom a mere *modus vivendi*” (Rawls 2005(1993), 146). The theory of liberalism that Rawls develops takes the freedom of the person and the goal of cooperation as foundational political principles. Under conditions of pluralism, liberalism accepts that it is unfair for society to adopt any comprehensive doctrine (religious *or* philosophical) and organize itself around notions that might not be held by all. The problem Rawls hopes to overcome is the contention that – if everyone supports a constitution on the basis of their own comprehensive doctrine, then the political community will lack sufficient grounds of agreement to settle disputes peacefully through the process. Rawls gives the example of Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth century agreeing to a constitutional peace in the hopes of eventually getting the upper hand and then using the state to enforce their own religious beliefs as an exemplar of the problems with a mere *modus vivendi* (Rawls 2005(1993), 148). The worry is that liberalism lacks close knit community ties and therefore collapses into religious, national, and ideological factions too easily. Rawls believes that overlapping consensus is capable of providing such ties, but while he seems optimistic that this is possible he presents the case for it largely in moral terms and offers little in the way of assurance that these forces are stronger than those working towards a thicker conception of political community.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ “The last difficulty I consider is that an overlapping consensus is utopian: that is, there are not sufficient political, social, or psychological forces either to bring about an overlapping consensus (when one does not exist), or to render one stable (should one exist). I can only touch on this question and merely outline one way in which it seems such a consensus might come about and its stability secured” (Rawls 2005(1993), 158).

Rawls outlines how he believes an “overlapping consensus” might overcome the charge of being utopian by first achieving a constitutional consensus, which “establishes democratic electoral procedures for moderating political rivalry within society” (Rawls 2005(1993), 158).¹²⁵ We need not agree on how to overcome our more comprehensive disagreements, but once we establish democratic procedures we are better able to work out the proper mechanisms to accomplish this. As an example of how this might come about, he cites the principle of toleration – which he claims “came about as a *modus vivendi* following the Reformation: at first reluctantly, but nevertheless as providing the only workable alternative to endless and destructive civil strife” (Rawls 2005(1993), 159). This example illustrates the infeasibility of a community based on an overlapping consensus, rather than the thicker notion of “comprehensive views” that Rawls is hoping to get away from. First, Rawls ignores the development of comprehensive views that provided the basis for post-Reformation Europe that allowed for the principle of toleration to take hold. As I’ll discuss in greater detail in the section on nationalism below, the eclipsing of religious difference as a comprehensive doctrine was made possible by the adoption of other comprehensive views. Rawls’s example is misleading because it takes the political marginalization of a particular set of comprehensive doctrines as evidence of the far more difficult task of overcoming the need for comprehensive doctrines in general. The notion that toleration marginalized religion as a political justification for conflict ignores the rising importance of ideology, ethnocentrism and class that developed as natural law theory developed alternative comprehensive doctrines on which to base society. Furthermore, attaching the notion of ‘overlapping consensus’ to the tradition of liberalism misleadingly associates liberal political

¹²⁵ “This rivalry includes not only that between classes and interests but also between those favoring certain liberal principles over others, for whatever reasons” (Rawls 2005(1993), 158-9).

philosophers and the ideological development of liberalism (including the rise of putatively ‘liberal states’) – with the notion of overlapping consensus. This may not have been Rawls’ intention, but the examples that he draws on (post-Reformation Europe, post-Civil War America) – make it difficult to imagine the precise form such a consensus might take without some such historical reference. This is particularly the case, since he maintains that: “Most people’s religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines are not seen by them as fully comprehensive, and these aspects admit of variations of degree” (Rawls 2005(1993), 160). This makes it difficult to contrast the comprehensive views of citizens (which Rawls takes to be empirical facts) with the type of allegiance he hopes people will develop to liberal principles of justice, which rely on “allegiance to institutions and to the principles that regulate them” which are “based in part on long-term self and group interests, custom and traditional attitudes, or simply on the desire to conform to what is expected and normally done” (Rawls 2005(1993), 161). It becomes difficult to see the difference between the comprehensive doctrines that Rawls enumerates (e.g. Catholicism, Kant’s liberalism, Mill’s liberalism, Marxism) and the views held by those who endorse an overlapping consensus – which seems to involve allegiance to traditions and institutions and the adoption of customs and traditional attitudes. Robert N. Bellah’s *Civil Religion in America* (1991) casts these very types of allegiance as a form of civil religion.¹²⁶ It is the very fact that political communities require some form of allegiance, traditions, and a desire to conform to what is expected that makes the idea of overlapping consensus utopian.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Bellah notes the role that the American Revolution, the Civil War, and the Civil Rights movement have played in the development of such a national consciousness: “Behind the civil religion at every point lie biblical archetypes: Exodus, Chosen People, Promised Land, New Jerusalem, and Sacrificial Death and Rebirth. But it is also genuinely American and genuinely new....It has often been used and is being used today as a cloak for petty interests and ugly passions. It is in need-as any living faith-of continual reformation, of being measured by universal standards. But it is not evident that it is incapable of growth and new insight” (Bellah 1991).

¹²⁷ Rawls does seem to acknowledge that “a full overlapping consensus is never achieved but at best only approximated” (Rawls 2005(1993), 165).

There are two things that I want to point out that are instructive in *Political Liberalism*. The first, is the articulation of the political problem that Rawls attempts to address. The fact that contemporary political society has to accommodate people with comprehensive views that are both incompatible and reasonable is a good starting point to address political issues of religious (and more broadly *philosophical*) difference. The second, is that the notion of an ‘overlapping consensus’ – whereby we attempt to construct agreements that do not attempt to force the reasonable views of some onto others – is a reasonable heuristic device to use when thinking about how to overcome such differences. When applied to particular issues of major disagreement (e.g. what should the national religion of the state be?) – it is reasonable to rely on the notion of overlapping consensus to see if there is another way to sort out the problem (e.g. let us avoid adopting a national religion at all and find other areas of agreement on which to base society).

I’ve also made two criticisms of *Political Liberalism*. The first, is theoretical. The notion of an overlapping consensus seems insufficiently thick to form the basis of society. Furthermore, any society that attempts to found itself on the basis of an overlapping consensus, in order to maintain its stability by maintaining the allegiance of its citizens over time, will require the establishment of general belief structures that are virtually indistinguishable from comprehensive views. My second criticism is about the association that Rawls draws between liberalism and the idea of overlapping consensus – which is emblematic of a propensity for liberal political philosophers to cast their theories as neutral or as based on principles that every ‘reasonable’ person can accept. As Rawls states: “political liberalism takes for granted not simply pluralism but the fact of reasonable pluralism” (Rawls 2005(1993), xviii). ‘Reasonable pluralism’ relies on the ability of citizens to accept a distinction between “a public basis of justification” which

belongs to the public sphere and a private “non-public justification” which is based in each individual’s comprehensive doctrine (Rawls 2005(1993), xix). This dualism, Rawls acknowledges, “is not a dualism originating in philosophy. Rather, it originates in the special nature of democratic political culture as marked by reasonable pluralism” (Rawls 2005(1993), xxi). Thus, Rawls sees the need for an overlapping consensus not as emerging from a philosophical view of the human condition but as a need produced by cultural conditions that have developed as a result of modern history. He cites three historical events as having created these cultural conditions: “the Reformation”, the rise of “the modern state”, and the development of “modern science” (Rawls 2005(1993), xxii-iii). What is reasonable therefore becomes related to a specific set of cultural conditions but is cast as neutral.

While I admire Rawls’s goal of articulating how one might organize political society in a way that is neutral to the comprehensive doctrines of its members, the historical development of liberal institutions has not managed to achieve an overlapping consensus. Some of the states with constitutions that most closely resemble what Rawls is talking about are the settler colonial states of England (the United States, Canada, and Australia). But it would be a mistake to see these states as having been founded on the principle of overlapping consensus, given their colonial histories. This is part of the problem with the history that liberal political philosophers associate with the development of secularism. They see compromises between different denominations of Christians as genuinely neutral and fail to see that those compromises were often made in the context of despoiling others. This is also why liberal principles have been so closely associated with the rise of empires and the ability of liberal states to exercise their power internationally. When the empire is strong, it is easy to be liberal – people’s lives are getting better. When the Empire begins to weaken it begins to scapegoat the very people who became a part of it as a

result of their imperialisms. The relationship between religion and the state has been so conditioned by colonial encounters that a brief history of liberal secularism and freedom of conscience is necessary.

The historical development of liberalism and freedom of conscience has allowed the state to sacrifice a certain amount of influence over ‘private’ religious matters in order to justify greater state control over the law and the economy. Thomas Hobbes begins the establishment of modern religious liberty by noting the natural necessity of freedom of conscience. Despite the fact that the sovereign has the ability to command public worship, since we may always practice what we will in private – private religious observance is beyond sovereign power.¹²⁸ Public worship, on the other hand, is under the sole control of the sovereign, for it is the sovereign’s responsibility to decide what way of life is most conducive towards security.

John Locke’s *Letter Concerning Toleration* expands the sphere of liberty that Hobbes confined to our private consciences. While Locke comes at the relationship between the state and the different professions of (Christian) religion from a number of different angles, his first reason for mutual toleration is that it is “the chief characteristic mark of the true Church” (Locke 1689, 3). Toleration, he believes, is a virtue of Christianity. His argument turns on the distinction between the worldly powers of the sovereign (established for the security of our persons and our private property) and the spiritual powers of the Church (established for the eternal preservation of our souls in the afterlife).¹²⁹ Similar to the NOMA argument from the second chapter, religion

¹²⁸ “A private man has always the liberty, (because thought is free,) to believe, or not believe in his heart....But when it comes to confession of that faith, the Private Reason must submit to the Publique; that is to say, to Gods Lieutenant [the sovereign]” (Hobbes 1985, 478).

¹²⁹ “The commonwealth seems to me to be a society of men constituted only for the procuring, preserving, and advancing their own civil interests....Civil interests I call life, liberty, health, and indolency of body; and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like” (Locke 1689, 6). He contrasts this with a church, which he considers: “a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord in order to the public worshipping of God in such manner as they judge acceptable to Him, and effectual to the

exists in a different social sphere from politics and each of them employs different means for different ends. The separation of church and state was an important historic compromise, as it placed limits on the role of religion in governance, while simultaneously carving out an area of public life for religion that was meant to be free from state control. While this separation is justified in jurisdictional terms, Locke is mindful of the conflicts that arise when civil and ecclesiastical institutions interfere with one another's affairs.¹³⁰ Thus, in addition to the jurisdictional argument, there is a pragmatic argument. The more the magistrate of the commonwealth confines their laws to the security of the state and the protection of property the better they will be able to manage these areas of life. Moreover, since the sole purview of the state is security of body and property, any attempt at organizing the state according to religious principles is illegitimate. Locke enjoins the magistrate to pass laws only with a view to the public good. The magistrate may be concerned with their spiritual salvation as a private person, but as a public official this ought to have no bearing on the implementation of sound policy. This public good is secular, in that it is defined in terms of state security and the economy – these being the only public concerns of the magistrate.

While Locke is willing to allow Pagans, Muslims, and Jews the same civic rights as Christians, he maintains that the magistrate need not tolerate any church “which is constituted upon such a bottom that all those who enter into it do thereby ipso facto deliver themselves up to the protection and service of another prince” (Locke 1689, 35). He singles out Muslims in particular in this regard. Unlike Christians, Muslims cannot “pretend” their religion is an element

salvation of their souls” (Locke 1689, 9). Note that membership in the commonwealth is not voluntary for Locke. While the church is given the broader purview (an entire way of life), it is a voluntary institution.

¹³⁰ Locke notes that some actions transcend the public/private division between state and church. “Moral actions belong, therefore, to the jurisdiction both of the outward and inward court; both of the civil and domestic governor; I mean both of the magistrate and conscience. Here, therefore, is great danger, lest one of these jurisdictions intrench upon the other, and discord arise between the keeper of the public peace and overseers of souls” (Locke 1689, 31).

of private faith, while living according to the public laws of a Christian monarch. This is because “he acknowledges himself bound to yield blind obedience to the Mufti of Constantinople, who himself yields to the Ottoman Emperor” (Locke 1689, 36). This insistence that Christians are tolerant and Muslims are not becomes a general theme in secular theory.¹³¹ The tack that Locke takes is similar to Rawls, who insists that it is only *reasonable* pluralism that can provide the grounds for an overlapping consensus. One is considered reasonable, insofar as they acknowledge that they are willing to forgo control over the comprehensive doctrines of others in exchange for not having their own comprehensive doctrines at risk of suppression by others. Yet the critique that Locke launches is not a comment on the religious practice of a particular person, but a theological critique of Islam in general. The notion that the convergence between the head of state and religious authority should prevent Muslims from engaging in a public/private distinction, but a similar political arrangement in England does not so prevent an English Christian imparts a fixed, authoritarian essence to Islam. Moreover, it sets up the distinction between the civilized, European subjects, capable of self-government, and the uncivilized, Oriental subjects, who require despotism for proper rule.¹³²

Marx’s criticism of the liberal separation between church and state shows the importance that religion continues to have in liberal-capitalist society, even as it leaves the political realm.

While Locke might establish a division between the private nature of religion and the political

¹³¹ Hurd, for example, describes how both the Judeo-Christian model and the laicized model of secularism developed in opposition to Islam. “Each trajectory of secularism draws on a different set of historical representations of Islam: laicist assumptions contribute to depictions of Islam as a surmountable though formidable stumbling block to the rationalization and democratization of societies, whereas Judeo-Christian secularist assumptions lead to more ominous conclusions in which Islam is portrayed as a potential threat to the cultural, moral, and religious foundations of Western civilization that must be successfully defused” (Hurd 2008, 47).

¹³² Edward Said’s seminal work *Orientalism* (1994), documents a number of the ways in which European civilization has been explicitly constructed in opposition to non-Europeans, particularly those living in ‘the Orient’. He notes that “philosophers will conduct their discussions of Locke, Hume, and empiricism without ever taking into account that there is an explicit connection in these classic writers between their philosophic doctrines and racial theory, justifications of slavery, or arguments for colonial exploitation” (Said 1994, 13).

nature of the state, the proper functioning of the institution of the state presupposes civil society's establishment of religion and private property.¹³³ This helps to explain Locke's argument that atheists cannot be tolerated. Like Hobbes, Locke makes religion the basis of our agreements with one another and the social contract of the state requires regular, voluntary submission to the rules of a church.¹³⁴ The separation of the state from the other institutions of civil society can only occur when those other civil institutions are functioning properly. This is revealed in the continued importance of religion in America, Marx believed. While America had emancipated the state from religion, the continued practice of religion showed the fundamentally religious character of their lives.¹³⁵ Thus, Marx argues that religion is not in fact the cause of political oppression, but rather the effect of such oppression.¹³⁶ The citizen continues to practice religion because the citizen is still subject to the exploitative market forces that make religion necessary.

John Stuart Mill's harm principle is the ultimate conclusion of the liberal movement towards pluralism that began with religious liberty. The principle of religious toleration was further expanded to encompass any belief and even any action that did not harm another person.¹³⁷ Mill excluded a number of groups from the sphere of liberty created by the harm

¹³³ "At times of special self-confidence, political life seeks to suppress its prerequisite, civil society and the elements composing this society, and to constitute itself as the real species-life of man, devoid of contradictions. But, it can achieve this only by coming into violent contradiction with its own conditions of life, only by declaring the revolution to be permanent, and, therefore, the political drama necessarily ends with the re-establishment of religion, private property, and all elements of civil society, just as war ends with peace" (Marx 1844, loc. 338).

¹³⁴ "Lastly, those are not to be tolerated who deny the being of a God. Promises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist. The taking away of God, though but even in thought, dissolves all" (Locke 1689, 36).

¹³⁵ "It is possible, therefore, for the state to have emancipated itself from religion even if the overwhelming majority is still religious. And the overwhelming majority does not cease to be religious through being religious in private" (Marx 1844, loc. 215).

¹³⁶ "Therefore, we explain the religious limitations of the free citizen by their secular limitations" (Marx 1844, loc. 188).

¹³⁷ "But when the heat of the conflict was over, without giving a complete victory to any party, and each church or sect was reduced to limit its hopes to retaining possession of the ground it already occupied; minorities, seeing that they had no chance of becoming majorities, were under the necessity of pleading to those whom they could not

principle –children, the mentally ill, and all ‘backwards societies’. Liberty is not a universal value in virtue of our humanity, but rather comes about “in the stage of progress into which the more civilized portions of the species have now entered” (Mill 1970, 127). Civilization takes on the roll that religion formerly played in providing the normative foundations of society. In this sense, civilization is a universal that is meant to be more fundamental than religious universals. Just as Christianity (or Islam or Buddhism, etc.) acted as a universal that effaced family, ethnic and linguistic difference, so civilization became the basis of a new, liberal order that was meant to efface religious difference.

As in the writings of Grotius, Christianity is delegitimized as the foundation of state, but then reintroduced, albeit in the secularized form of European Civilization. Civilization is what makes Europe different from the rest of the world (where an ‘Akbar’ is the best form of government to be hoped for), and also from its own past (when the best that could be hoped for was a ‘Charlemagne’).¹³⁸ In this way, metaphors of progress make reference to both time (Europe moving out of its own history) and space (Europe moving ahead of the rest of the world). To this day freedom remains a central value in modern political philosophy, but it also remains a privilege reserved for the ‘civilized’. England and France, for example, can enter into trade agreements and respect one another’s borders and the private property of one another’s citizens. England and the peoples of Africa or the Americas are unable to do so, because of their lack of sovereignty. Internally, England may have an interest in different forms of freedom and

convert, for permission to differ. It is accordingly on this battle field, almost solely, that the rights of the individual against society have been asserted on broad grounds of principle, and the claim of society to exercise authority over dissentients, openly controverted” (Mill 1970, 133).

¹³⁸ “Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end. Liberty, as a principle, has no application to any state of things anterior to the time when mankind have become capable of being improved by free and equal discussion. Until then, there is nothing for them but implicit obedience to an Akbar or a Charlemagne, if they are so fortunate as to find one” (Mill 1970, 136).

pass laws that grant new rights to the English people; but their agreements abroad are understood in terms of protecting trade and the private property of their expatriates. When colonial powers established secular governments abroad, their goal was not to enfranchise the people there or implement liberal governments like those systems at home. The more secular they were, the more content they were to let the natives govern themselves – so long as they didn't challenge the political and economic hegemony of the country governing them.¹³⁹

The Treaty of Westphalia managed to establish legal principles and mechanisms that would help create peace within Europe while guaranteeing nothing to non-European states. While religion was delegitimized as a reason for conflict, the common Christian heritage of the treaty's signatories meant that the new international order was an order established between Christian states. Moreover, the anarchic basis of international law meant that the very principles established by the Treaty of Westphalia were not extended to non-signatories. Saba Mahmood gives one example of this in her examination of how Europeans managed to extract concessions from the Ottomans over religious liberty and autonomy for all Christians (and later all non-Muslims) following the Crimean and Russo-Turkic wars (Mahmood 2016, 35). Such actions violate the principle of sovereignty established with the Treaty of Westphalia, which strictly prohibited religious interference in one another's states, but the Christian monarchs never perceived one another's interference with the Ottomans as a threat to the principle of *cuius regio eius religio*. If civilization is the abstract capacity that gives a people the right to self-determination and the Treaty of Westphalia was the first legal mechanism used to recognize

¹³⁹ In addition to not being a principle that is necessarily accepted abroad, liberty is not a principle that can be granted to simply everyone at home either. The expansion of enfranchisement within even the most liberal states was tragically slow. At home, however, the disenfranchised had mechanisms to press for reform - the starting point of which was always winning the vote. One cannot meaningfully enter into a free discussion unless one is already considered an equal.

whether a people had attained a sufficient level of civilization to enter into the international order, then the secular basis for international law is an agreement amongst Christians. Non-Christians are allowed recognition by the international order – but only after they have learned to mimic European civilization. Colonization, which can no longer be religiously justified, becomes justified on the basis of its civilizing mission. Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) calls the civilizing process described by Mill ‘historicism’. Historicism asks the colonized to wait until their civilization has advanced sufficiently before being granted rights and the opportunity to self-govern.¹⁴⁰ Chief amongst the characteristics of civilization is adherence to the rule of law (often laws established under colonial governments) and respect for the property rights of others (often property that was established under colonial governments).

My goals in this section were to undermine the notion that liberal models of secularism were based on the principle of ‘overlapping consensus’ and to argue that the actual historical emergence of liberalism has been based on the colonial enforcement of civilization. I noted that the liberal state was modelled on a secular/religious binary, such that the state was given authority over force and property, while religion was given control over what was voluntary. Since the state wanted to increase its ability to regulate the lives of its citizens, but promised to tolerate their religious beliefs, it had to develop independent ethical principles. Liberal states evaluate the values professed by other states not in religious terms (Christian/non-Christian) but in civilizational terms (civilized/uncivilized). The transition from a religiously homogenous society to a pluralist society in which religion was privatized was within Europe a major triumph

¹⁴⁰ “Mill’s historicist argument thus consigned Indians, Africans, and other ‘rude’ nations to an imaginary waiting room of history. In doing so, it converted history itself into a version of this waiting room. We were all headed for the same destination, Mill averred, but some people were to arrive earlier than others. That was what historicist consciousness was: a recommendation to the colonized to wait. Acquiring a historical consciousness, acquiring the public spirit that Mill thought absolutely necessary for the art of self-government, was also to learn this art of waiting. This waiting was the realization of the ‘not yet’ of historicism” (Chakrabarty 2000).

for the principle of overlapping consensus. In colonial contexts, however, the separatist model of secularism functions as a technique used by empires to regulate large numbers of people from different cultures and religions. The colonized are allowed to believe what they want, so long as they respect the colonial state's monopoly over violence and the sanctity of private property. Furthermore, liberal colonial governments exported their military and property models but did not export the principle of popular government. The legacy of this system has established a number of secular states that guarantee rule of law, private property, and attempt a neutral stance on issues of religion. When such states lack democratic institutions, religious institutions attempt to fill the void, which emphasizes religious national identity over secular notions of citizenship.¹⁴¹

2.2 Communism.

Communism became the most anti-religious political ideology. Marx wanted to abolish the “illusory happiness” of religion in favor of the “real happiness” that would only be possible in the post-revolutionary society he envisioned (Marx 2012(1843), 4).¹⁴² Religion was not the cause of exploitation and suffering, but Marx did believe that it was an effect of the alienation brought about by the effects of capitalism. In historical practice, communist parties and social movements regularly ran up against religious institutions as carriers of values and hierarchies that would need to be abolished in order to secure the real interests of the people. However, once communist political parties got into power, they moved from a critique of the dominant political

¹⁴¹ Egypt is a perfect example of this type of state. In her study of Egyptian secularism, Saba Mahmood argues: “the regulation of religion under secularism has not simply tamed its power but also transformed it, making it more, rather than less, important to the identity of the majority and minority populations. This process has resulted in the intensification of interreligious inequality and conflict, the valuation of certain aspects of religious life over others, and the increasingly precarious position of religious minorities in the polity” (Mahmood 2016, 15).

¹⁴² Note that Marx uses a functionalist approach to religion, which sees it as including forms of secular-nationalism that fall outside of the definition I employ.

institutions, to the task of solidifying their power. The state institutions that had once been objects of criticism (such as the military, the schools, and the family) became the institutions that various communist states relied on to maintain their regime. The solidarity of the vanguardist party became more important to the ideological adherents of communism than the interests of the people. As communist political parties lost the faith of the people and their ideological hold over states collapsed, many people turned towards religious communities to organize their opposition to the state.

Taylor (2014) notes that the principle of equality has been expressed in increasingly radical terms over time. This radicalization has been in response to the gross inequalities that have been justified by the principle of liberty. Liberal philosophers, like Locke, made maintaining the rights of private property holders one of the chief tasks of government. However, the maintenance of the rights of property holders was found to increasingly conflict with the principles of democratic governance also championed by liberalism. James Madison saw the tension between liberty and democracy as stemming from a conflict between the masses of poor people and the wealthy few. Charles Beard's (1965) *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* shows the tendency of the emerging democratic state to use the constitution to entrench the economic interests of the wealthy against the pressures of democratic reform:

Madison warned his colleagues against the coming industrial masses: 'viewing the subject in its merits alone, the freeholders of the Country would be the safest depositories of Republican liberty. In future times a great majority of the people will not only be without landed, but any other sort of property. These will either combine under the influence of their common situation; in which case, the rights of property and the public liberty will not be secure in their hands, or, which is more probable, they will become the tools of opulence and ambition; in which case there will be equal danger on another side' (Beard 1965, 25).

Commenting on Beard's interpretation, Howard Zinn noted "the slightly prosperous people who make up this base of support are buffers against the blacks, the Indians, the very poor whites. They enable the elite to keep control with a minimum of coercion, a maximum of law – all made palatable by the fanfare of patriotism and unity" (Zinn 2003, 99). The principle of liberty and the ideology of liberalism more generally, have become important features of American nationalism.

For Marx, the liberty of the United States Constitution or that in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, was only another means of mystification. With liberal rights "man was not freed from religion, he received religious freedom. He was not freed from property, he received freedom to own property" (Marx 1844, loc. 659). Marx redefined religion from the narrow conception adopted by Feuerbach, to encompass all of those ideas that caused people to misidentify their interests – including nationalism and liberal ideology. It was not enough to abandon churches in favor of secular-nationalist institutions – the causes of alienation and oppression had to be addressed in order to emancipate people from their religious beliefs.

Marx's criticism of the religious nature of the secular state is most fully developed in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Here, we find perhaps the most quoted line in all of Marx's oeuvre – "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people" (Marx 2012(1843), 4). Religion is an illusion according to Marx. This is true in a metaphysical sense – but for Marx the more sinister part of the illusion is that it is predicated on social inequality.¹⁴³ Indeed, he maintains that the *raison d'être* of religion is to convince people to support a political regime that is designed to

¹⁴³ "The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is the demand for their *real* happiness" (Marx 2012(1843), 4-5).

exploit them. Marxism conceived itself as the antithesis of religion in this sense. If religion was the illusion upon which social inequality was predicated, Marx saw his philosophy as the means by which we become disillusioned.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, he believed that this disillusionment was inevitable.¹⁴⁵ Marx took the fact that religion had persisted in America, where religion had never been established, as proof that capitalist oppression produced the very conditions that made religion possible. Religion is not responsible for exploitation, but rather the effect of such oppression.

However, Marx's overall critique of Hegel's idealism is that the idealization of Germany's conditions necessarily entail a negation of its real conditions (for Marx, its material conditions). Hegel's philosophy, according to Marx, gives the state an abstract and moral power formerly reserved for religion.¹⁴⁶ The private rights of individuals (particularly in the form of private property), insofar as they are guaranteed by the state, rather than from the material conditions of society, are subordinate to the existence of the state. For Marx, "secularization will not stop at the confiscation of church estates set in motion by hypocritical Prussia [or other states] any more than emancipation stops at princes" (Marx 2012(1843), 9). Emancipation from religion implies an emancipation from all transcendent notions that place political authority outside of humanity, including the authority of the state. While Hegel argues necessity is the *raison d'Etat*, the abstract ideal of the state remains the subject in Hegel's philosophy (in Marx's eyes). For Marx,

¹⁴⁴ "To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions" (Marx 2012(1843), 4). The *Communist Manifesto* is even more explicit on this point: "Communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion, and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis" (Marx and Engels 1978(1888), 489).

¹⁴⁵ "What the bourgeoisie...produces, above all, is its own gravediggers. Its fall and the proletarians revolution are equally inevitable" (Marx and Engels 1978(1888), 483).

¹⁴⁶ "When Hegel calls the Executive power the objective aspect of the sovereignty residing in the crown, it is precisely in the same sense that the Catholic Church was the real existence of the sovereignty, content, and spirit of the Blessed Trinity. In the bureaucracy the identity of the state's interest and the particular private aim is established such that the state's interest becomes a particular private aim opposed to other private aims" (Marx 2012(1843), 47).

the critique of the modern state is part and parcel of the critique of religion. It is the transcendent and independent nature of the values of religion – which he argues exist in the ideology of the modern state, which causes people to act against their own best interests.¹⁴⁷ His reason for critiquing Feuerbach and Hegel was to demonstrate that their critiques of religion were well founded, but that stopping with civil society and its existence under the aegis of the modern state was to replace one form of subordination with another.

Ideological communists often maintain the critique of religion in all the intensity that is found in Marx, but history has dimmed their opposition to the ultimate object of his critique – the modern state. While Marx himself was highly critical of the state as the transcendent expression of bourgeois values, the legacy of Marxist political movements have been content to focus on the state as the best means to fight the exploitative powers of capitalism. Marxist materialism is one of the main reasons for this. Relying on principles of generosity or charity has struck Marxists as insufficient to solve the problems of gross inequality that have resulted from private capital accumulation.¹⁴⁸ Even the development of class consciousness was not enough, if state institutions were capable of corruption and manipulation by the bourgeoisie. Communist electoral victories and popular uprisings were often violently suppressed by states attempting to keep them from coming to power. Revolutionary communist movements required authority to implement their new visions of society.

¹⁴⁷ “It is, therefore, the task of history, once the other-world of truth has vanished, to establish the truth of this world. It is the immediate task of philosophy, which is in the service of human history to unmask self-estrangement in its unholy forms once the holy form of self-estrangement has been unmasked” (Marx 2012(1843), 4).

¹⁴⁸ The Marxist interpretation of the principle of equality was not inevitable. G.A. Cohen attempts to capture the virtues of an ethic of egalitarianism that avoid the pretensions to inevitability and the need for revolutionary violence in favor of an ethic of egalitarianism. For Cohen, who draws on racism and feminism for examples, the site of justice is interpersonal. Cohen’s loss of faith in Classical Marxism led him to critique the argument that socialism would proceed inexorably from the structure and contradictions of capitalism. He states: “I now believe that a change in social ethos, a change in the attitudes people sustain toward each other in the thick of daily life, is necessary for producing equality” (Cohen 2000, 4).

There is a tension in Marx's writings about the state. On the one hand, the state based its authority on certain forms of violence and coercion that were antithetical to the ideals of the society he envisioned – which would be free as well as equal. A communist society would have no reason for coercive laws. It is on this basis that Engels interpreted Marxism to involve the gradual death of the state, rather than its abolition (Engels 2010(1878)). On the other hand, the revolution to achieve this society would require a certain amount of violence and coercion to take place – instruments that sovereign state institutions were already set up to manage. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels write: “Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie” (Marx and Engels 1978(1888), 482). But this conflict is potentially never ending. Marx is most emphatic about the need to maintain the state in his debates with Bakunin following the publication of *Statehood and Anarchy*. Bakunin had expressed an aversion to Marxism because it made the immediate aim of the revolution “the founding of the people's state which, as they explain it, will be nothing other than the proletariat ‘organized as the ruling class’” (Marx 1978, 542). This, according to Bakunin, merely leads to the establishment of another subordinate class that will be ruled over by the now dominant proletariat. Bakunin notes that the peasant class, in particular, may find themselves oppressed by the urban proletariat. Marx insists that it is only the vestigial capitalist class that will be targeted by the government:

“This means that so long as other classes continue to exist, the capitalist class in particular, the proletariat fights it (for with the coming of the proletariat to power, its enemies will not yet have disappeared), it must use measures of force, hence governmental measures; if it itself still remains a class and the existence of classes have not yet disappeared, they must be forcibly removed or transformed, and the process of their transformation must be forcibly accelerated” (Marx 1978, 543).

As communist parties began to establish themselves, Bakunin's worries about the capacity for the revolutionary government to tyrannize over the population seem to have been justified. Ideological communists were able to dismiss the concerns of their critics as 'false consciousness' or 'counter-revolutionary ideology', since Marxist theory had already established the gap between people's actual and their perceived interests. Thus, communist revolutionary movements (as with the bourgeois movements that preceded them) became focused on the coercive power of the state to remake society.

Hannah Arendt notes that: "even the fanatical adoption by the Bolsheviks of the greatest antinational doctrine, Marxism, was counteracted and Pan-Slav propaganda reintroduced in Soviet Russia because of the tremendous isolating value of these theories in themselves" (Arendt 1968, 236). While different political parties and organizations inspired by Marx took a number of different paths in their attempts to achieve a revolutionary society, the ones that were most successful were the ones that combined themselves with nationalist projects. The need to use sovereign power to remake society meant that communist political parties began availing themselves of nationalism as a means of promoting state power. Stalin's 'socialism in one country' doctrine became the model adopted by most successful communist parties. Everywhere that communism flourished, it became enmeshed in the national culture of the society it sought to revolutionize. This was frequently accomplished through the expansion of national institutions and the repression of religious faith.¹⁴⁹ Benedict Anderson notes that one of the polemical intentions of *Imagined Communities*, was to support the work of Tom Nairn, who held that "the theory of nationalism represents Marxism's great historical failure" (Anderson 2006, 3). A

¹⁴⁹ Anna Dickinson (2003) documents a turn in Soviet policy, from repression to cooptation, in the years 1941-6. In 1936, only 950 churches remained of the nearly 40,000 that existed prior to the revolution and a lack of parochial schools prevented the training of new church officials. By 1946, however, the Church had regained its educational institutions and increased the number of churches to 2,866.

proper appreciation of the problems, as well as the successes, of nationalism help to clarify some of the reasons for this failure.

It is sometimes easy to forget what a force in the world communism once was. It once seemed like nothing could stop its spread as it became the ideology of the oppressed. Further, the one-party model made it particularly adept at motivating nationalist struggles of liberation and preventing counterrevolutionary forces from coming back into power. Nearly every country in the world that had a population that was dissatisfied with colonialism or corrupt post-colonial governments turned to communism as a means of organizing the population, gaining international allies (and weapons), and giving voice to a spirit of rebellion that sought the overthrow of the status quo. If we look at the fifty year period between 1940 and 1990 – we see the gradual eclipse of communist ideology as motivating nationalist and anti-liberal movements. During this period, we see the expansion of the USSR into Eastern Europe following World War Two, the defeat of the Nationalists by the Chinese Communist Party in 1949, North Korea's attempt to re-unify Korea during the Korean War, the Bolivian National Revolution in 1952 put power in the hands of the leftist National Revolutionary Party until a coup in 1964, Cuba's revolution in 1959, Algeria's War of Independence established a socialist state in 1962, South Yemen became communist in 1967, the People's Republic of the Congo was a Marxist-Leninist state from 1970-1991, Ho Chi Minh unified Vietnam under communism in 1974, and communist governments took control in Laos and Cambodia in 1975. After Angolan independence the communist/socialist government of the MPLA took power, Somalia became communist in 1969, Ethiopia in 1974, and Nicaragua became socialist with the victory of the Sandinistas in 1979. This is only a partial list and only mentions those communist or socialist movements that managed to take power. Unsuccessful revolutions gripped many countries in Latin America,

South Asia, Southern Europe, and Africa. Since 1989, however, there have been few successful communist revolutions.¹⁵⁰

If we compare that to the overlapping fifty-year period beginning in 1967, we see the steady rise of religious association as the basis for nationalist, anti-liberal regimes – starting with the Six Day War between Israel and its neighbors, which in turn set the stage for the War of Attrition in 1970 and the Yom Kippur War in 1973, as well as the Palestinian Intifadas (from 1987-1993 and 2000-2005). Lebanon was also embroiled in several wars with Israel, as well as its own civil war between 1975 and 1990. Islamic nationalists deposed the Shah of Iran in 1979 and soon afterwards Iraq, citing fears of Shia nationalism spreading, invaded. Many communist states also began falling to religious-nationalists: the Soviet-Afghan War from 1979-1989 pitted the US backed mujahideen against the Soviet-backed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and the Algerian Civil War began in 1991 with a coup to prevent the democratic victory of the Islamists. The former Yugoslavia split largely along religious lines in their nationalist conflicts during the 1990s. After Somalia's communist government collapsed it left a vacuum that was filled by a series of warlords before the Union of Islamic Courts finally came to power in 2006 – which in turn provoked an invasion by Ethiopia, which had been fighting Somali Islamists in the Ogaden desert and worried that an Islamic government in Somalia would bolster the separatists. After a protracted civil-war, Sudan's Christian south was recognized as independent from the Muslim north in 2011. While the first American invasion of Iraq was justified using arguments related to protecting Kuwait's sovereignty – the military bases that were established in Saudi Arabia turned the mujahideen against the United States. The American-led wars in Iraq and

¹⁵⁰ There are some exceptions to this, such as the Maoist Unified Communist Party of Nepal, which removed the King of Nepal from power and won the most seats in their 2008 election.

Afghanistan were framed in religious terms after the September 11th attacks in 2001. Arab Spring led to the electoral success of a number of Islamist parties in North Africa. The Muslim Brotherhood won elections in Egypt in 2011, before they were removed by a military coup. Syria has descended into a protracted civil-war between various secular and religious factions, while Islamic State militants were (briefly) able to take control of large areas of Iraq and Syria. Again, this is a partial list and only contains examples where religion has managed to pose a major threat to the sovereignty of states. In many other places (including the United States) religious organizations play a large role in politics.

State-Communism has lost both its apparent inevitability and much of its appeal to the dispossessed. There is no USSR to fund and arm revolutions around the world. Cuba no longer sends fighters to Angola or Bolivia. Even as communist governments fell, religious nationalist movements have grown in popularity. Sometimes, religious movements have overthrown the communist regimes in the countries in which they sprang up – as in Afghanistan and Algeria. Old religious allegiances have also reasserted themselves in the wake of state-collapse – as was the case in the former Yugoslavia, Russia and Poland. Some communist political parties have made alliances with religious organizations to gain an added degree of legitimacy, as is the case with the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. In the wake of the Catholic Church's help in procuring a thaw in Cuban-American relations, even Raul Castro has stated that he is considering a return to the Church (in spite of his continued commitment to Communism).

Despite the increasing globalization and integration of capitalist market-economies, communist political parties largely relied on the sovereign state system to militate for equality. Their revolutionary antagonism towards liberal-capitalism has been blunted. This is often perceived as a 'fall' for communist inspired politics. It ought to be remembered that liberal states

have also blunted their opposition to some of the demands for equality made by socialist parties over the last century. Union protections, public education, public healthcare, minimum wages, limits on the length and intensity of the work day, and many other state policies designed to push for various forms of equality have been instituted by most liberal states. The tension between the principle of equality and the principle of liberty persists but it is perceived as a tension that those on both the left and the right believe can be settled by either the democratic or economic processes of the state. The left have increasingly accepted the democratic process to mediate their demands for equality. The FMLN in El Salvador and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua have both won elections and the FARC in Colombia have just agreed to a peace deal that would see them give up their arms in exchange for inclusion in the democratic process. The successes of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States have made non-violent political action the preferred way of criticizing the state by accepting the democratic process that serves as the foundation of its authority. Meanwhile, the right have gradually accepted that economics will protect property rights in most states, regardless of the form of government there. China has become a capitalist dream for American investors and Cuba has been liberalizing its command economy since the USSR withdrew its economic support. While there were a number of important advancements that were the result of the drive for equality championed by communist parties, communism has lost so much vitality that religion has largely replaced it as the ideology of militant protest. This ought to be of great surprise to Marxists as fifty years ago, no one would have predicted communism's collapse or the political resurgence of religion that we've seen in recent years.

2.3 Nationalism.

In this section, I look at the rise of nationalism and its relationship with religion.

Nationalism typically has three relationships with religion: it can use religion for its own purposes; it can establish itself independently of religion; and it can attempt to suppress religion. These relationships are not mutually exclusive.¹⁵¹ In many places, nationalism has been conceived as a means of providing a new, civil grounds for political life that is capable of overcoming religious violence. However, nationalist movements have often used popular religious institutions, in addition to ethnic or linguistic markers, to thicken their sense of community. Even where nationalist movements have been able to separate themselves from any particular religious tradition, this hasn't necessarily led to a reduction in religious intolerance – as overt signs of religious belief become interpreted as symbols of resistance to integration in the national community. I am particularly interested in the differences between endogenous models of secular nationalism and their colonial counterparts, which I will discuss separately below. When pre-national state institutions have been developed by colonial powers, they sometimes lack the legitimacy of older, more established religious institutions. Despite these drawbacks,

¹⁵¹ China, for example, simultaneously uses all three strategies in its relationship to Tibetan Buddhism. Buddhism is one of the oldest imagined communities in Tibet and as such, has become one of the most authoritative institutions calling for Tibetan independence. China continues aggressive re-education campaigns of Tibetan monks and nuns, according to Human Rights Watch (2016). At the same time, China has entered into a public dispute with the Dalai Lama over the next reincarnation of the spiritual leader. Tibetan studies specialist, Robert Barnett, sees the continued attempts by the Chinese Communist Party to control Tibetan Buddhism as fascinating, since “nobody in the Communist Party seems to have ever considered the possibility that they could rule Tibetans without a lama to be their intermediary....[it] seems to come out of an unquestioning idea that because Tibetans are often religious, they're therefore not susceptible to rational arguments about how wonderful Communism is and you have to persuade them through religion” (Inquiry 2015). This example is illustrative of the religious-secular conflicts that have been springing up recently. From the perspective of the Dalai Lama, the Chinese Communist Party is continually trying to overstep the proper limits of government and interfering in the religious lives of Tibetans. From the perspective of the Chinese Communist Party: “It's not about the freedom of religion....It is about sovereignty - whether Tibet can remain part of China” (Inquiry 2015).

nationalism also provides the grounds for popular sovereignty and doesn't seem to be going anywhere. Like religion, nationalism has become an indelible feature of contemporary politics.

The French Revolution's emphasis of *fraternité* expresses the desire to live in a 'thick' political community.¹⁵² Rather than basing their imagined community off religious affiliation or their unity under an absolute monarch, the national community imagined itself using the metaphor of a brotherly, or familial bond. Anderson defines the nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 2006, 5). It is imagined since the members of a nation 'imagine' themselves as being in a community with people they have never met. It is limited because, unlike Latin-Christendom which sought to expand to include all of humanity, French nationalism limited their community to members of the nation. The nation is imagined as sovereign, in the sense of a unified notion of 'the people' being the basis for all political power. And it is a community, "because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (Anderson 2006, 8). It is the willingness of people to die for their national communities that has made nationalism such a powerful and frightening force in the world.

Nationalism sought unity through homogeneity and religion was used by princes (both secular and religious) to achieve this. Machiavelli's account of Phillip of Aragon's use of "pious cruelty" to unify Spain by driving out the Muslims and Jews serves as a particularly chilling example. In places where religion makes up the strongest and most enduring imagined

¹⁵² Here I'm transposing Sudipta Kaviraj's distinction between 'thick and thin' religions to the political realm. Since both religion and nationality generate senses of belonging the concept moves between the two quite smoothly. See pages 57-8 for a further description.

community, it often serves as the basis for nationalism. Talal Asad argues that the “established church, which was an integral part of the state, made the coherence and continuity of the English national community possible. We should not say that the English nation was *shaped or influenced* by religion: we should see the established church as...its *necessary condition*” (Asad 2003, 190). When the forces promoting nationalism increase the pressure to homogenize, religious nationalism takes on an increasingly intolerant form. This pressure to homogenize is neither inherent in religion, nor is religion necessarily the most violent or conflict prone carrier of national values. Nevertheless, the pressure to conform makes religious nationalism as dangerous a phenomenon as any other type of nationalism.

Hannah Arendt famously criticized the inherent limitations of the nation-state, in contrast to the universality of human rights championed by a more liberal state:

The secret conflict between state and nation came to light at the very birth of the modern nation-state, when the French Revolution combined the declaration of the Rights of Man with the demand for national sovereignty. The same essential rights were at once claimed as the inalienable heritage of all human beings and as the specific heritage of specific nations, the same nation was at once declared to be subject to laws, which supposedly would flow from the Rights of Man, and sovereign, that is, bound by no universal law and acknowledging nothing superior to itself. The practical outcome of this contradiction was that from then on human rights were protected and enforced only as national rights and that the very institution of a state, whose supreme task was to protect and guarantee man his rights as man, as citizen, and as national, lost its legal, rational appearance and could be interpreted by the romantics as the nebulous representative of a ‘national soul’ which through the very fact of its existence was supposed to be beyond or above the law. National sovereignty, accordingly, lost its original connotation of freedom of the people and was being surrounded by a pseudomystical aura of lawless arbitrariness. (Arendt 1968, 230).

In contrast to the state, which established a legal jurisdiction, and Christianity, which based community ties on confessional affiliation – European nations turned towards an ethno-linguistic definition of ‘the people’. In France, the religious wars between Catholics and Protestants were integral parts of their national heritage – a conflict that the French-nation was

imagined as having overcome.¹⁵³ Due to France's history of religious conflict, French nationalism was motivated to take on a secular identity, which increasingly worked against religious affiliation in constructing how the French people imagined themselves.¹⁵⁴ In contrast to states that saw an established religion of the sort championed by Machiavelli and Hobbes as the best way to construct the nation's identity, France increasingly saw its nationalism in terms meant to transcend its religious divides.

It would be a mistake to think that French nationalism's ability to overcome a Protestant/Catholic divide meant that France had become religiously neutral or tolerant. Arendt argues that modern anti-Semitism found its birth in the nation. "The breakdown of the feudal order had given rise to the new revolutionary concept of equality, according to which a 'nation within the nation' could no longer be tolerated. Jewish restrictions and privileges had to be abolished together with all other special rights and liberties" (Arendt 1968, 11).¹⁵⁵ Religion can become a powerful source of discrimination – by secular bodies as much as other religions.

¹⁵³ Anderson turns to the works of Renan to show how national consciousness is often constructed on the basis of 'remembering to forget' conflicts that unified the nation. Renan simultaneously calls to mind the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre and the thirteenth century 'massacres du Midi', while calling on his contemporaries to forget these events. "The effect of this tropology is to figure episodes in the colossal religious conflicts of medieval and early modern Europe as reassuringly fratricidal wars between – who else? – *fellow Frenchmen*. Since we can be confident that, left to themselves, the overwhelming majority of Renan's French contemporaries would never have heard of 'la Saint-Barthélemy' or 'les massacres du Midi,' we become aware of a systematic historiographical campaign, deployed by the state mainly through the state's school system, to 'remind' every young Frenchwoman and Frenchman of a series of antique slaughters which are now inscribed as 'family history.' Having to 'have already forgotten' tragedies of which one needs unceasingly to be 'reminded' turns out to be a characteristic device in the later construction of national genealogies" (Anderson 2006, 204-5).

¹⁵⁴ It was not only domestic religious conflicts that influenced France's model of secularism, however. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd argues that contemporary French secularism also owes its form to its colonial experiences confronting Muslims in Algeria. "Laicism served as an ideological and practical measuring rod that helped to define and bound political modernity broadly and the European 'civilizing mission' specifically. In French interventions in the Middle East and North Africa, the expulsion of religion from politics was identified with progress and civilization, while Islam was associated with Oriental despotism" (Hurd 2008, 50). The relationship between national secularism and colonial secularism will be explored in greater detail in the next section.

¹⁵⁵ Martha Nussbaum (2012) sees a similar tendency in modern expressions of islamophobia. Their allegiance to their religious community and religiously prescribed laws is taken by some to mean that they will also be bad civil subjects.

When both the secular-nationalist members of a state and the religious members of a state perceive another religion as foreign they often align themselves against what they perceive as a common threat. Thus, non-religious French citizens and Catholic ones are able to surmount their differences and relate to one another as citizens, but when Jewish or Muslim immigrants enter the polity – their religiousness becomes grounds not only for exclusion, but for worries that they will never be able to fully integrate and therefore present a threat to the nation.

On the other hand, nationalism has also been the mechanism for the establishment of popular, legitimate government. Benedict Anderson proclaims that “the ‘end of the era of nationalism’, so long prophesied, is not remotely in sight. Indeed, nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time” (Anderson 2006, 3). Hannah Arendt mourns the collapse of universal human rights guaranteed by the state into a set of national rights. However, it was only with the power of the ‘nation’ that the state was taken away from the absolute monarchs that preceded it. She is right about the ‘pseudomystical aura of lawless arbitrariness’ that surrounds nationalism. Nevertheless, the abstract state might require a national consciousness to direct the state towards a particular set of interests. If democratic governance always falls to a particular people, it is worth questioning whether it is possible without falling prey to the particular prejudices of that people. The tension between the democratic features of sovereignty doctrine and its unitary expression put the private interests of citizens (sometimes their economic interests, sometimes their interests in religious values) behind whatever public interest the holders of sovereign power might decide. When the ‘democratic’ process is manipulated by class, racial, or cultural prejudice it attempts to appeal to the national character of the state to justify excluding some groups from full participation in political life.

The sovereign state derives its power from the people but also has a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. If a community lacks access to the legislative and executive functions of the state, they live politically vulnerable lives. This is the case for oppressed political groups, the subjects of colonies, and failed states. Despite ideals like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, groups of people have good reason to prefer the legal protection of nation-states to the ideals espoused in international agreements. The fact that other political rights can only be guaranteed by the state and the state so frequently displaces political dissatisfaction onto the ‘others’ of the nation, means that those excluded from the community not only lose the protection of the state but also become targeted by state machinery. The secular rights stemming from states tend to be much stronger than abstract secular principles of toleration or human rights.

Democracy requires a certain amount of cultural stability and mutual trust to function. Spinoza’s definition of democracy as “a united gathering of people which collectively has the sovereign right to do all that it has the power to do,” (Spinoza 2007, 200), requires a ‘united’ notion of ‘the people’ in order to have democracy. The people are capable of a certain level of disagreement (encapsulated by the state’s various, national political parties) – but this can only be maintained when there is a normative framework in place that binds them both to their institutions and to one another.¹⁵⁶ While this normative framework frequently takes the form of a shared religion, it can also take the form of ‘national values’. These values, which are often reinforced through state laws, carry the ‘religious aroma’ that Marx disparaged, as well as the ‘aura of lawless arbitrariness’ that Hannah Arendt criticized. As with individual self-

¹⁵⁶ In Spinoza’s formulation, the democratic citizen possesses three traits: 1) they’ve managed to curb their desires, 2) they do not do anything to anyone else that they do not want done to them, and 3) they defend one another’s rights as their own (Spinoza 2007, 198).

determination, national self-determination risks a certain amount of arbitrariness to be realized. Work like Anderson's shows that human societies require thicker notions to keep them together than abstract principles can necessarily provide.

In Europe, the basis of nationalism has tended to select language and common history as its basis. A number of secular spheres have developed to inculcate these beliefs, including: literature, the mass media, and the public education system. Anderson reminds us that:

In an age when it is so common for progressive, cosmopolitan intellectuals (particularly in Europe?) to insist on the near-pathological character of nationalism, its roots in fear and hatred of the Other, and its affinities with racism, it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love. The cultural products of nationalism – poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic arts – show this love very clearly in thousands of different forms and styles (Anderson 2006, 146).

There is clearly a need for a better understanding of the types of bonds that exist between members of a national community, when they overlap with religious, kinship, class, and ideological communities. National identity has proven to be an easy thing to mobilize groups of people around. When confronted with state-backed nationalistic fervour, principles have difficulty competing.¹⁵⁷ Even when nations have lacked the power to take control of states, imagining themselves as a closely knit family has been a key feature of political mobilization. Black Nationalism in America, for example, began with a group of people whose primary relationship with one another was a racist stigmatization by society and united its members into a group capable of collective action. When the interests of a group are insufficiently represented by a nation-state, that state opens itself up for the development of other nationalisms.

¹⁵⁷ One example of this can be seen in the varied histories of the artistic faculty of the socialist German Bauhaus School when suddenly immersed in National Socialism--from arrest, and exile, to compromise, and collaboration (Bergdoll and Dickerman 2009).

Nationalism has an ambivalent relationship with religion. Different nations adopt different models of state secularism on the basis of their perceived role in the community. Where a religion is associated with national homogeneity and church and state have a history of mutual support, that religion is more likely to be established (or at least accommodated). By way of contrast, when a religion is associated with external threats to state security or internal threats to national unity, nation-states will often target those religions with restrictive laws and national distrust. In nation-states, religious affiliation is frequently associated with immigration and in contemporary states, much of that immigration is the result of imperial expansion and globalization.¹⁵⁸

3. Colonial States, Religious Threats

As much as the Treaty of Westphalia encouraged an end to European border movements, it also encouraged strong, centralized states to seek out weaker states for colonization. When we understand secularism as a state project heavily influenced by the rise of nationalism, it becomes apparent that secularism takes on different characteristics in colonial contexts. Anderson notes:

In the original edition of *Imagined Communities* I wrote that ‘so often in the “nation-building” policies of the new states one sees both a genuine, popular nationalist enthusiasm, and a systematic, even Machiavellian, instilling of nationalist ideology through the mass media, the educational system, administrative regulations, and so forth.’ My short-sighted assumption then was that official nationalism in the colonized worlds of Asia and Africa was modelled directly on that of the dynastic states of nineteenth-century Europe. Subsequent reflection has persuaded me that this view was hasty and superficial, and that the immediate genealogy should be traced to the imaginings of the colonial state. At first sight, this conclusion may seem surprising, since colonial states were typically anti-nationalist, and often violently so. But if one looks beneath colonial ideologies and policies to the grammar in which, from the mid nineteenth century, they were deployed, the lineage becomes decidedly more clear (Anderson 2006, loc. 3288-89).

¹⁵⁸ A French friend of mine told me a ‘joke’ about the French attitude towards Muslim immigrants that reflects this sort of hypocrisy. “Why do all these immigrants feel they have a right to come to France as they please? The French would never be so audacious as to go to another country and try to implement their way of doing things.” It is not hard to find examples of this, as nearly every liberal state with a history of imperialism has created the very conditions for immigration that they deplore once their empire enters decline.

For this grammar, Anderson turns to three institutions that he argues were critical in both the management of colonized states and in prefiguring the rise of the nations that took their place – the census, the map, and the museum. Drawing primarily on sociological research in South Asia, Anderson notes a number of ways in which these institutions attempted to regulate the lives of the subject population through the imposition of secular categories, which took race, place, and history as important markers of belonging meant to overcome religious affiliation. Charles Hirschman's examination of British colonial censuses of what became Malaysia, for example, found that groups were created, agglomerated, disaggregated, and disbanded in rapid succession and on an extremely arbitrary basis (Anderson 2006, 173). Moreover, as time went on the census categories became increasingly racial in nature, while religion was consistently deemphasized as an identity category.¹⁵⁹ Commenting on the census, Anderson notes that religious affiliation:

served as the basis of very old, very stable imagined communities not in the least aligned with the secular state's authoritarian grid-map. To different degrees, in different Southeast Asian colonies, the rulers were compelled to make messy accommodations, especially to Islam and Buddhism. In particular, religious shrines, schools, and courts – access to which was determined by individual popular self-choice, not the census – continued to flourish. The state could rarely do more than try to regulate, constrict, count, standardize, and hierarchically subordinate these institutions to its own. It was precisely because temples, mosques, schools and courts were topographically anomalous that they were understood as zones of freedom and – in time – fortresses from which religious, later nationalist, anticolonials could go forth to battle. (Anderson 2006, 173).

Like the census, the map served as both an ideological and a technical-bureaucratic tool of the colonial state. John Harrison's invention of the Chronometer in 1761 allowed the world to be divided up into boxes, which could then be explored and surveyed (Anderson 2006, 176). Oftentimes, the map preceded the geographic communities it was meant to represent. Anderson

¹⁵⁹ Charles Mills notes: "'Race' gradually became the formal marker of this differentiated status, replacing the religious divide (whose disadvantage, after all, was that it could always be overcome through conversion). Thus a category crystallized over time in European thought to represent entities who are humanoid but not fully human ('savages,' 'barbarians') and who are identified as such by being members of the general set of nonwhite races" (Mills 1997, 23).

draws on the work of Thongchai Winichakul, who notes how the colonial map even helped to construct the borders of Siam, which was never colonized. The introduction of European style maps, with their totalizing division of the earth into quadrants, prefigured the boundaries of Siam between the colonial territories that bordered it.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, Anderson notes the way the census and the map worked together to manage subject populations. The census “conjured” up ethnic groups, while the map attempted to attach those groups to fixed territories (Anderson 2006, 178). This attempt to define communities in terms of an ethnic and territorial unity binds a people to a racial and cultural vision of itself that a religion might not hold. Islam and Buddhism, for example, imagined their communities in terms that weren’t limited to territory or ethnicity.

Finally, the museum allowed colonial states to attach themselves to a local history. The museum served to secularize sacred objects and sites, which became no less socially important, but lost their spiritual significance in favor of a cultural significance. Moreover, the colonial state used these ancient monuments to place themselves as guardians of a local tradition that the natives could not be trusted to preserve themselves.¹⁶¹ This enabled things like the theft of the Elgin Marbles from Greece, which England uses to proclaim themselves the good liberal guardians of history while ignoring the requests for that history’s return to Greece.¹⁶² Local history was linked, through a secularized Christian calendar, to European world history. Control

¹⁶⁰ “In other words, a map was a model for, rather than a model of, what it purported to represent” (Thongchai cited in Anderson 2006, 177).

¹⁶¹ “Monumental archeology, increasingly linked to tourism, allowed the state to appear as the guardian of a generalized, but also local, Tradition. The old sacred sites were to be incorporated into the map of the colony, and their ancient prestige (which, if this had disappeared, as it often had, the state would attempt to revive) draped around the mappers. This paradoxical situation is nicely illustrated by the fact that the reconstructed monuments often had smartly laid-out lawns around them, and always explanatory tablets, complete with datings, planted here and there. Moreover, they were kept empty of people, except perambulatory tourists (no religious ceremonies or pilgrimages, so far as possible). Museumized this way, they were repositioned as regalia for a *secular* colonial state” (Anderson 2006, 186).

¹⁶² In the British Museum, where the Elgin Marbles are housed, a plaque hangs next to them with the Ottoman colonial governor’s stamp on it to proclaim the legitimacy of the English acquisition.

over colonized land, resources, and culture was held in trust by Europeans (like their sovereignty) until they had developed a sufficient level of ‘civilization’ to manage for themselves.

A number of theorists have joined Anderson in noting the ways in which the model of nationalism was exported to colonial states implemented new, secular European ways of imagining communities. Mark Juergensmeyer notes that “When Europeans colonized the rest of the world, they were often sustained by a desire to make the rest of the world like themselves” (Juergensmeyer 2011, 188). An interesting transition in colonial history, however, is between early patterns of colonization that were thoroughly religious, like the Spanish conquest of the Americas, and later more secular ones. As colonization proceeded, colonial states adopted increasingly secular rationales for their existence. Sound, bureaucratic management of the state (particularly as it facilitated the adoption of European property relations) gradually eclipsed the religious mission of conversion as the primary justification for the colonial state. The shift away from religious justifications for the colony was accompanied by a shift towards the civilizing mission of the colonial state and the rise of liberal ideology.¹⁶³

But in what did ‘civilization’ consist? It did not consist in the development of the popular, democratic institutions that were developing in Europe – these institutions were the rewards of those who had ‘progressed’ to a sufficient level of civilization. The colonial state was premised on conquest, first and foremost. The consent of the people, which European political theory used to legitimize state power was, by definition, lacking in the colonial state.

Juergensmeyer, following Weber, notes that the authority of the secular nation-state lay in

¹⁶³ Juergensmeyer notes that: “The commitment of colonial administrators to a secular nationalist vision explains why they were so hostile to the Christian missionaries who tagged along behind them: missionaries were the liberal colonizer’s competitors. In general, the church’s old religious ideology was a threat to new secular ideology that most colonial rulers wished to present as characteristic of the west” (Juergensmeyer 2011, 189).

“absolute control undergirded by the moral order of political violence” (Juergensmeyer 2011, 196). For Weber, all other claims to political authority (by the state or other civil institutions) stem from the state’s absolute monopoly over force. Where this force is popularly controlled by national institutions, there is a relative degree of acceptance to the legitimacy of state order. In other contexts, however, “the legitimacy of the secular nation-state has been eroded by several factors, including a resurgent new wave of anticolonialism, the corrosive power of globalized economic and communication systems, and the corruption and incompetence of secular rulers” (Juergensmeyer 2011, 192).

Secular nationalism provided a normative moral framework for political communities that was not religious. In spite of this, it would be a mistake to look at the relationship between nationalism and religion as a necessarily antagonistic one. In many instances, religious institutions have supported the state and even relied on the state to spread them around the globe and deepen the religious consciousness of citizens at home. Talal Asad notes that “in later eighteenth-century England, supporters of the established church regarded it as a representative institution reflecting popular sentiment and public opinion” (Asad 2003, 190). Other times, a deeply anti-religious culture has taken root in states and threatened different religious groups with laws restricting their religious practice or identity, like in France or (later) Communist China. Complicating the relationship between secular nationalism and religious belonging is the ‘secularization’ of religious symbols. Since some forms of nationalism have long traditions of established religions the line between a national symbol and a religious one is blurred.¹⁶⁴ This becomes a particular problem if the majority religion is represented under the guise of ‘national

¹⁶⁴ For example, 64 out of the world’s 196 countries have religious symbols incorporated into their national flags (Theodorou 2014).

culture' but minority religions are not allowed similar accommodations because they are too thoroughly 'religious'. Finally, some secular models were established in colonial states and therefore the state models of secularism that they adopted were the result of colonial conquest, rather than a model based on some form of national consensus. This has meant that sometimes the secular model has presented itself to the colonized as an oppressive institution and been challenged by religious institutions that colonized people view as more legitimate and more representative of the national culture.

4. Conclusion: 'The Private Is Political'

In this chapter, I've examined three different types of secular ideology that have arisen to reform society. In each case, the sovereign state centralizes power, even as it makes the base of that power more democratic. By taking authority away from sacred notions of the divine and placing them in the hands of the sovereign people, secularism relies on the mass mobilization of the people to justify political authority. In the wake of this development, competing ideologies attempted to organize society on the basis of worldly ideals. This transition, from a social imaginary that justified state power in religious terms to one in which state power was justified in terms of a 'modern moral order,' was based on the establishment of an ethics that was independent from religion. This did not result in a decrease in political violence, as nationalist, colonial, and ideological movements fought one another for supremacy. A major part of this, I've argued, is that the state was understood primarily in terms of force and thus disagreements over what the state ought to do with its power quickly become violent conflicts. While states are often able to respond to the wants and needs of their citizens, they also wield more power over their citizens than ever before. People's ability to direct the state is therefore also accompanied by a vulnerability to state prerogatives.

But the private is political. As feminists, Marxists, critical-race theorists, and critical gender theorists have been challenging modernist political categories, so too is religion challenging the status quo of what is religious and what is secular. In communist states, religion was often attacked as a holdover from an oppressive past. In liberal and colonial states, toleration was the reward of those who accepted the sovereign and economic status quo but people want more than mere toleration. In a similar way to how a desire for self-determination takes the form of nationalism, religious believers want their society to better reflect them and their traditions. Part of the reason for the energy that religious movements display may be because religion was made a private thing in so many places for so long. When the state failed to satisfy the need for self-determination and a sense of belonging, people have turned to religion instead. In the next chapter, I look at the political critiques that philosophers have levelled at religion's role in politics and note that many of the features of religion that make it a problem for political theorists are in fact the same features that have led to religion's resurgence. Thus, while this chapter has focused on the demand side of religion in public life (why do people want an alternative to secular notions of identity) – the next chapter will focus on the supply side of religion in public life – what public roles do religions serve that make people want them.

V. Political Features of Religion

In spite of the rise of secular ideologies, religion has maintained its political importance in the world. Part of this, I argued in the previous chapter, was because the sovereign state relied on nationalism to provide the communal bonds necessary for society. When people feel excluded from the national culture of their state, they turn to other communities and institutions for help. Yet, when we turn to the political qualities of religion, it seems no less complicated a phenomenon. In this chapter I want to examine some of the features of religion that have troubled modern political philosophers, in the sense that religion became a danger that needed to be managed by the state. I examine four social characteristics of religion that frequently come under attack: (1) religiously imagined communities; (2) the institutional structures of religions; (3) religious traditions; and, (4) religion's connection to emotional enthusiasm. My focus in discussing each of these characteristics will be to note both the political problems that religions can cause, as well as the important social services that they provide.

It is important to acknowledge the many concerns that political philosophers have launched against religion. Religious institutions often have corrupt officials that play on ignorance and intense moral feeling to expand their influence; religious nationalists protest against the state and threaten its stability; religious enthusiasm often becomes violent or manages to convince state actors to pass laws that force religious values onto non-believers; and religious traditions often serve as impediments to social and political progress. However, I also want to highlight some of the socially salutary functions of religion, which are inseparable from these troubling features. Religions often provide alternative notions of community and other resources that states are unable or unwilling to provide; they provide space and validation for the

oppressed, who sometimes lack access to political or economic power. Most importantly, religious traditions anchor many people's sense of identity, providing commonly accepted values that no society can do without – including secular societies. Rather than try to carve out a place for religion and its relationship with the state using a priori principles, attending to the nuances of the political context allows a more strategic engagement between religious believers and the state.

1. Religiously Imagined Communities

In the previous chapter, we saw how the rise of sovereignty doctrine and the political pressure of the Wars of Religion gave rise to new theories about the ways we might imagine our communities. Nationalism, in particular, served to bind states together, and often sought to dissolve disputes between different religious groups by promoting an ethno-linguistic basis for community membership over a religious one. In this section, I discuss the worry that many early-modern political philosophers held, that religious communities divided the loyalties of citizens and promoted sedition. In the second part of this section, I note the ways in which discourses about a 'clash of civilizations' have framed a number of geo-political conflicts in religious terms. In this way, we can see that contemporary concerns over religion and its reemergence into the public sphere are conditioned by concerns over Islam in particular, and the idea that 'Western Civilization' has incommensurable values from 'Islamic Civilization'. The problem with such claims is not simply that they adopt essentialist views that are meant to describe enormous numbers of people and complex social phenomena, but that they create self-fulfilling prophecies that seem to validate such claims.

1.1 Religions divide loyalties; civilizations unite them.

Since the Reformation, religious authority has troubled secular authorities and political philosophers. Machiavelli blamed Catholicism for keeping Italy divided. Hobbes warned against the civil strife that would result from dividing the “sword of justice and the shield of faith” (Hobbes 1985, 499). Yet both of them maintained a place for religion in their political theories. A major concern of early modern political philosophy was over how to retain the benefits of religion while avoiding its pitfalls. Rousseau sought to refute what he believed were the extreme opinions of Bayle and Warburton. “The former argues that no religion is useful to the body politic, while the latter maintains the opposite, that Christianity is its surest support” (Rousseau 1999, 162). Rousseau divides religion into three types: civil religion, the religion of man, and the religion of the priest. He instantly dismisses the third, for the same reason as Hobbes – that it divides sovereignty and leads to anarchy and disorder.¹⁶⁵ Of the other two types, he says that despite civil religion being based on “error and lies” and the religion of man being “true, sacred, and holy” a state ought to promote the former over the latter (Rousseau 1999, 162-3). This is because the religion of man lacks the passion, concern for worldly affairs, and the strict adherence to civic duty promoted by civil religion. The precise characteristics of the civil religion are unimportant to Rousseau – so long as they promote obedience to the rule of law and avoid intolerance. Intolerance is the greatest ill caused by religion and wherever it is allowed, it divides the sovereign power. The civil religion therefore is tolerant of any belief, so long as it is consistent with sociability within the republic. Its tenets are therefore not ‘religious dogmas’ but instead ‘sentiments of sociability’. As we saw in the previous two chapters, with the rise of

¹⁶⁵ “Among all the Christian writers, only Thomas Hobbes, the philosopher, has clearly perceived both the disease and its remedy and dared to suggest the reunion of the two heads of the eagle” (Rousseau 1999, 161).

secularism a civilizational notion of the good takes on the trappings of religion. The emphasis shifts from developing devout Christian souls, to developing good French citizens.

Rousseau's criticism of the 'church of the priest' takes all religion with a clergy to be a division of sovereignty, with all the attendant worries that Hobbes predicted. Unlike Hobbes, he was not only critical of churches that had independent ecclesiastical authorities, but also of those state churches that placed the monarch at their head. The latter, he believed, were as bad as the former because the sovereign was not able to then abolish or truly reform the religion. They were therefore "not its legislators, but only its rulers" (Rousseau 1999, 161). The reasons for Rousseau's criticism of the 'church of the priest' are that he felt that priests enriched themselves at the expense of the political community and that priests posed a danger to the unity of the state. While many institutional functions were still performed by the church (e.g. marriage, birth, and last rites), he believed that the state must appropriate these functions or else risk the church leveraging them into further powers for themselves.

Added to the worry that religion might divide loyalty, were worries that such citizens would logically follow their religious laws over their civil laws because God's law and authority superseded sovereign law and authority. Hobbes saw the higher set of demands that religion was able to place on their adherents as a particularly important danger that religion presented to political authorities. He writes: "It is impossible a Commonwealth should stand where any other than the Sovereign, hath a power of giving greater rewards than Life; and of inflicting greater punishments, than Death" (Hobbes 1985, 478). The justice of the state depends on law and the law depends on the power of the sovereign over the life and death of its subjects. A problem for secular political philosophers, such as Hobbes, is making sure that the state retains the ability to inflict the 'ultimate punishment' -- if religion offers the possibility of an even greater

punishment, then people will be inclined to follow the ecclesiastical authorities and subvert the laws of the commonwealth. This fear about the ability of religion to impose a higher set of demands on political subjects becomes a general feature of secular anxiety about religious believers. Martha Nussbaum sees this fear as a feature of both anti-Semitism and islamophobia. “Muslims, like Jews, are always accused of having a double loyalty, and both are seen to submit themselves to a double set of legal requirements – religious law somehow making them bad subjects of civil law” (Nussbaum 2012, 148). At stake is the worry that when authority is placed in different hands, those authorities will always come into conflict and religious adherents will inevitably side with religious law.

Yet this worry about religion’s divisive effect on sovereignty might not be as inevitable as these theories assume. Brian T. McGraw’s empirical examination of the role played by religiously motivated political parties in Europe “shows that socially and politically mobilized sectarianism can work powerfully to solidify and entrench, not upend and destroy, free and stable democratic institutions” (McGraw 2010, loc. 311). Many of these parties, like the Dutch Calvinists’ Anti-Revolutionary Party, felt that religion had a role to play in every aspect of life and hoped to use the political process to advance their sectarian agenda. Nevertheless, McGraw finds that most of these sectarian parties managed to reconcile themselves to the democratic process as the best means to achieve their aims. One reason he advances for this counter-intuitive position, is that when religious parties seek to mobilize their members, they often end up (sometimes accidentally) accepting the legitimacy of the democratic political instruments that bring them to power.¹⁶⁶ Once religious believers accept that politics is best conducted through

¹⁶⁶ A modern example of this is the divide between Islamist parties that took place in Egypt in the 1970s. While some, such as Al-Jihad argued that violence was the only way to create an Islamic state, those that believed the democratic path to power was the best and more legitimate joined the Muslim Brotherhood. This caused some security analysts to argue that the election of the Muslim Brotherhood to power was actually a good thing as it

electoral institutions, the state becomes that much more stable. McGraw concludes his study by noting that:

public reason and deliberative restraint are meant to buttress the moral and practical elements of political legitimacy. But they neglect to their discredit the practical side of things, meaning that they overestimate religion's propensity to disrupt democratic stability and underestimate its potential for the converse. Attending more closely to the practical aspects of political legitimacy shows that we should trust – have faith, we might say – that the institutions and practices of constitutional democracies can handle the tempestuous conflicts of something akin to constitutional consensus. Democracies do not self-destruct because citizens disagree over the proper boundaries of church and state or even – as Rawls himself reminds us – over questions of war and peace (McGraw 2010, loc. 3440).

Insofar as different religious communities inculcate respect for law and order, justly derived political authority, and discipline – they are capable of improving social stability and contributing towards a democratic order. Liberal secularists, like Locke or Rawls, acknowledge this possibility, but note that some religious communities refuse to engage in deliberative restraint or to engage in the political process reasonably (as Locke believed was the case for Muslims).¹⁶⁷ These types of religious beliefs are indeed the ones that are causing problems. Yet it is worth asking how much contemporary religious conflicts are motivated by an unreasonable attachment to a fictional belief, as the metaphysical approach to religion maintains, and how much there are political reasons that can help to explain the divergence between groups that accept the democratic process and those that do not.

demonstrated that democratic debate, and not terrorism, was the best way forward. The Brookings institute noted that: “the Brotherhood would crush any revival of al Qaeda-linked groups in Egypt. Al Qaeda leaders have blasted the Brotherhood for rejecting jihad and engaging in the political process, and the Brotherhood would not risk a return to the violence that engulfed Egypt in 1990. Even more important, the Brotherhood's success in gaining power would be a political blow to al Qaeda and would discredit the terrorists' claims that jihad is the only path to success” (Byman 2011). The imprisonment of Mohammad Morsi following the coup that ousted the Muslim Brotherhood from power has arguably proven the more extreme faction correct – the secular forces of Egypt are not willing to play by the democratic rules they champion.

¹⁶⁷ See chapter four for a discussion of Locke's anxiety over Islam and its politicization as well as an account of Rawls's differentiation between reasonable and unreasonable comprehensive doctrines (such as religious views).

1.2 Thick and thin communities.

What kind of community is a religion and how does a religious community intersect with our political communities? Durkheim's definition from chapter two is a helpful place to begin. He defines religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions – beliefs and practices that unite its adherents in a single moral community called a church" (Durkheim 2001, 46). The use of the term 'moral community' as opposed to simply 'community' implies that religion is distinct from other forms of community, such as that of the nation. Similarly, the term 'church' implies a particular form of institution that we can distinguish from other institutions, such as the state. A drawback with Durkheim's definition is that it seems to already accept the division between law and morality as well as between church and state that Locke introduced as key parts of liberal theory. Moreover, nationalism and ideology seem to fit Durkheim's definition of religion, with the main difference being the institutional structure that unites them. Nationalism seems most closely associated with institutions of public education, and ideology tends to be associated mostly with institutionalized political parties. According to Durkheim's theory, then, a religious community includes ideology and nationalism as sources of motivation, making it an extremely plastic notion. Depending on context, sometimes religion is more like ideology, which involves some active participation in maintaining one's belief in it and other times it is more like nationalism, which is an identity marker that is usually inscribed on people regardless of their desire to adopt it themselves.

Sudipta Kaviraj's (2010) notion of thick and thin religions, from the second chapter, is another source that can help shed light on the nature of religious communities. Unlike citizenship, which establishes a homogenous legal relationship between the individual and the

state, religions are able to establish a variety of different relationship forms between their members. Thick notions of religious community, such as the highly localized form of Hinduism that Kaviraj sees his grandfather practicing, provide strong local connections and well defined notions of social behavior. Thin notions of religious community dispense with many of the localized beliefs and practices that characterize thick religions, attempting to forge a broader community made up of diverse people from different places. Universalist religions, like Christianity or Islam, have a ‘thinning’ function built into them.¹⁶⁸ Their ability to attract more adherents makes them malleable to change as people from various backgrounds convert to them. This allows a common identity to maintain itself across cultures and states. As Kaviraj (2010) notes, there is a very modern and political logic to constructing identities around thin notions of religion, as it allows members to mobilize the forces of democracy and violence against outsiders more effectively. Thick communities might exert more power over their limited membership, but modern politics demands the mobilization of large numbers if groups want to be heard.

It may seem that I am straying close to an interpretation of religion and religious conflict similar to Samuel Huntington’s (1993) belief that post-Cold War politics are going to be framed primarily in terms of a ‘clash of civilizations’. Ideological and inter-state conflicts are on the decline and the transnational nature of certain world religions has allowed them to actively engage in politics once more. While we remark on a number of the same phenomena, our interpretations of what is driving it are remarkably different and I want to briefly go over what they are. Huntington argues that the “differences between civilizations are not only real, they are basic” (Huntington 1993). But civilizations, like nations, are not natural entities, but rather imagined ones. While imagined communities have very real effects in the world, it is worth

¹⁶⁸ See chapter three for a discussion of how Catholicism served as a ‘thin’ community as it expanded.

questioning: a) why a community has been imagined in a particular way and b) if there are other ways of imagining such communities. As the previous chapters attempt to show, the notion of civilization has itself been constructed with the intent of hierarchically differentiating Europe from the rest of the world. Huntington compares civilizations to ideologies and regimes, maintaining that such differences are much more superficial than civilizational differences. In fact, it seems more like the similarities within a civilization are more superficial than the differences between ideologies and nations. The idea that what unites a Sunni Muslim from Egypt and a Shia Muslim from Iran is real and basic, whereas only a superficial difference separates a Communist and a British Nationalist Party member is plainly ridiculous. Edward Said argues that Huntington “wants to make ‘civilizations’ and ‘identities’ into what they are not: shut-down, sealed-off entities that have been purged of the myriad currents and countercurrents that animate human history, and that over centuries have made it possible for that history not only to contain wars of religion and imperial conquest but also to be one of exchange, cross-fertilization and sharing” (Said 2001). Huntington ignores the tendency for hybridity as well as heterogeneity that are almost universally acknowledged as core traits of culture (Said 1994).

Huntington advances notions of cultural essentialism, wherein “cultural characteristics and differences are less mutable and hence less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones” (Huntington 1993, 27). This is similar to the argument examined in the second chapter that religious difference necessarily led to political difference because the claims of religion could not be compromised over. But cultures can allow compromise, when they are willing to see past superficial differences. A small example of a ‘clash of civilizations’ occurred recently in Canada, when a Quebec judge demanded that Rania El-Alloul, a Muslim woman, remove her headscarf. “The same rules need to be applied to everyone. I will therefore not hear

you if you are wearing a scarf on your head, just as I would not allow a person to appear before me wearing a hat or sunglasses on his or her head, or any other garment not suitable for a court proceeding,” the judge said (Rukavina 2015). On the face of it, this issue is rather absurd, and the Prime Minister and a number of other Canadian officials quickly condemned the judge. But this is representative of the view that there can be no compromise between different cultural traditions. The judge believed that Rania El-Alloul’s unwillingness to remove her headscarf was a sign of disrespect to the secular aspirations of the court, while El-Alloul believed that the demand that she remove her headscarf was disrespectful of her religion. Such a ‘clash of civilizations’ shows that, contrary to Huntington’s contention that culture admits no compromise, a willingness to see beyond superficial differences and accommodate one another can resolve such disputes. It also shows that an unwillingness to do so is what generates such conflicts in the first place. The judge in this case ignored a long history of legal culture that had never enforced such a rigid view of the rules of appropriate court attire, as well as a constitutional requirement for religious accommodation, in order to justify refusing to hear the case. Such selective ignorance is surprising in a judge, unless they’ve already accepted the idea that there is an unresolvable clash happening between religion and the secular state. Such thinking creates a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Huntington’s work attempts to incite the very conflict it pretends to predict. Said notes that Huntington’s theory emerged just as there was a rush “to find in an Orientalized Islam a new empire of evil” after the end of the Cold War (Said 1994, 346). What Huntington is doing here, to draw on Kaviraj’s language, is attempting to construct a very ‘thin’ notion of identity in order to politically mobilise large numbers of people. Like white supremacists who predict a coming race war in order to convince whites to provoke such a conflict, Huntington sets up a massive

conflict between mutually exclusive groups and claims they will not be able to compromise. This, in turn, leads to an increase in the number of ‘civilizational clashes’ both in quotidian acts of intolerance and in grand political conflicts. The rather understandable reaction of the U.S. to Al-Qaeda following the September 11th attacks transforms into much looser justification for the invasion of Afghanistan and then finally the American-led invasion of Iraq. It is all part of the ‘clash of civilizations’, no matter how different and far removed from one another the conflicts seem.

While I am often troubled by Westerners who adopt the logic of a ‘clash of civilizations’, equally troubling is the possibility that more Muslims will begin to think in this way. When a group is marginalized in daily life and held collectively responsible for the actions of some of their members, it has the effect of both uniting them and turning them against those persecuting them. Locke noted this tendency long ago and it is one of the reasons he gives for religious toleration. “Believe me, the stirs that are made proceed not from any particular temper of this or that Church or religious society, but from the common disposition of all mankind, who when they groan under any heavy burthen endeavor naturally to shake off the yoke that galls their necks” (Locke 1689, 38). Oppression is a major factor in the development of most sub-nationalisms that arise and attempt to challenge the hegemony of the nation-state. Locke comments that if we were to deny civil rights to people on the basis of something as arbitrary as having ‘grey-eyes’ that it would not be long before they banded together to oppose the state. Once a group has banded together in this way, it is difficult for state authorities to back down, as they see the threat that such a group presents and react against it with further marginalization and violence.

Religion is not significantly different from ethnic or linguistic nationalism in this way. Tariq Modood notes that the centre-left intelligentsia, despite its open acceptance of the need to combat racism and sexism, has had more trouble accepting religion as a source of oppression for groups in need of collective rights (Modood 2004). “While for some this rejection is specific to Islam, for many the ostensible reason is simply that it is a religious identity and in virtue of that should be confined to the private sphere. What is most interesting is that, if this latter objection is taken at face value, the difference theorists, activists and paid professionals are reverting to a public-private distinction that they have spent three decades demolishing” (Modood 2004, 110). Part of what seems to be at issue here, is that religion involves more active participation in certain belief structures than race, gender, or sexual orientation. The latter are things that you have no control over, whereas religion is something you choose to espouse.¹⁶⁹ This approach to religious difference relies on the notion that religion is primarily about beliefs in supernatural agents, which I’ve been arguing against. The first thing to bear in mind, is that even though religion is different from ethnicity, religion and ethnicity often parallel one another. Prior to the UK’s recent passing of anti-religious discrimination laws, the laws prohibiting racial discrimination protected both Sikhs and Jews, since these were considered ‘ethnic groups’ – whereas ‘Muslim’ was not considered an ethnic category (Modood 2004). A Muslim might be protected from discrimination on the basis of being ‘Arab’ or ‘Pakistani’ but not on the basis of

¹⁶⁹ Dawkins famously challenged the idea that children can be members of a religion and likened the practice of ascribing religion to children to child abuse. He recalls: “Once, in the question time after a lecture in Dublin, I was asked what I thought about the widely publicized cases of sexual abuse by Catholic priests in Ireland. I replied that, horrible as sexual abuse no doubt was, the damage was arguably less than the long-term psychological damage inflicted by bringing the child up Catholic in the first place” (Dawkins 2006, 317). It is worth noting that Dawkins recently attracted widespread criticism when he commented (without evidence) that a young Muslim boy, who’d built a clock and brought it into school – only to be arrested on suspicion of making a bomb, had in fact orchestrated the entire thing (Hunt and Safi 2015). Ascribing Machiavellian motives to a child on the basis of their religious background is the type of discrimination that victims of religious discrimination cite as compelling reasons to give them the type of group-based legal protections we give to groups on the basis of race and gender.

being Muslim. As shown by Locke's comment on 'grey-eyed' people, associating more with members of one's religion is bound to happen when one is the subject of religious discrimination – even when one doesn't believe in any particular doctrine. Non-practicing Jews are often lumped into the identity category of 'being Jewish' by active practitioners and by non-Jewish bigots alike. Religious bigots and racists often don't attempt to carefully differentiate between the two, as when Hindu temples are subject to attack in North America in retaliation for acts of Islamic terrorism. Moreover, religion resembles culture, in that it is not something you are born with, but rather something you adopt – but often in ways that are more unconscious than other beliefs. If one were to discriminate against people on the basis of the food they eat, or the clothes they wear – is this really less important a grounds of discrimination because it is something that one actively chooses, rather than the product of the way someone was born? Canada has recently apologized for the residential school system, which took thousands of Indigenous children away from their families in an attempt to 'civilize' them by preventing them from practicing their traditional cultures. This practice has been labelled 'cultural genocide', which, if we accept it as an appropriate name, implies that horrific acts of extermination apply to the cultural ideas and practices that hold a people together, not just their 'genetic' identity. Given the immense psychological and human toll that the residential school system was responsible for – this seems appropriate.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada defines cultural genocide as: "the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015).

Modood argues that the rise of Muslim political identity in Europe follows a very similar trajectory to the rise of secular political nationalisms like the black power movement or Quebec nationalism (Modood 2004). Following Iris Young, he notes that the current demands of ‘racial-equality’ go much beyond what they did in the 1960s, when the Civil Rights movement fought for inclusion. Rather than an equal opportunity to assimilate and adopt the norms of the dominant groups, as liberal ideology might expect, excluded groups are increasingly finding that “a positive self-definition of group is in fact more liberatory” (Young in Modood 2005, 105). The importance of this psychological response to stigma, he argues, is no less true of religious groups than it is of gay pride, feminist, or ethnic groups. “In this respect, the advances achieved by anti-racism and feminism (with its slogan ‘the personal is the political’) acted as benchmarks for later political group entrants....while Muslims raise distinctive concerns, the logic of their demands often mirrors those of other equality seeking groups” (Modood 2004, 105). A pride in the particular features of one’s group identity, rather than a willingness ‘to leave others be’ in exchange for ‘being left alone’, is a core feature of contemporary identity politics – whether secular or religious. This, I believe, is also one of the reasons for the success of nationalism and religion, over the abstract political systems proposed by ideological political theories. Being allowed to participate is not enough for groups seeking equality, they want to be included in ways that go beyond not being excluded.

Religious communities have troubled secular political philosophers because of the worry that they divide loyalties and promote sedition. These fears have been amplified in contemporary politics by discourses of a ‘clash of civilizations’ which attempt to unify enormous swathes of the global population, primarily on the basis of religion. Such discourses essentialize cultures and see unbridgeable divides, where there is in fact much room for sharing and compromise. The

tragedy of such ideas, is that they have the capacity to become self-fulfilling prophecies by playing on people's collective passions and provoking the very types of clashes they predict. A willingness to recognize that such conflicts are not new and an examination of how they have been resolved in the past is required to get beyond them.

2. The Institutional Structures of Religion

The institutional structures of religion have often come under fire for the corruption they give rise to. This was a cornerstone of the early-modern criticism of the Catholic Church and a lived experience for Machiavelli. Machiavelli's theory of religious and political corruption indicates, however, that religious institutions can balance out some of the corruption of our political institutions and vice versa. This function of religious institutions is not inherent in the nature of religion itself, but an outcome of the communal and institutional features that many religions possess.

2.1 The Catholic Church as paradigmatic corrupt institution.

The medieval power of the Catholic Church, particularly surrounding the office of the papacy, often serves as the paradigmatic image of the institutional corruption that exists in religious organizations. Casanova notes that:

Catholicism served as the central focus of the Enlightenment critique of religion. It offered for centuries the most spirited, principled, fundamentalist, and apparently futile resistance to modern processes of secularization and modernization in all spheres. It fought capitalism, liberalism, the modern secular state, the democratic revolutions, socialism, the sexual revolution. In brief, it has been the paradigmatic form of antimodern public religion (Casanova 1994, 9).

The Enlightenment criticism of the Catholic Church has provided the fuel for a more generalized critique of religion. The fact that the Catholic Church had opposed so many features of modernity was taken as a sign that, wherever religion entered the public sphere and took on a political role, it was liable to become corrupt. Rousseau believed that all churches with priests

were corrupt (Rousseau 1999), and Spinoza held that the lucrative and prestigious nature of church positions had caused religion to degenerate into “sordid greed and ambition” (Spinoza 2007, 7).

Chapter three laid out the reasons Machiavelli saw the corruption of the Catholic Church as the chief obstacle to Italy’s unification. He blamed the ‘irreligiousness’ of Rome for the political disorders of Italy. This is related to his theory of political corruption. The corruption of the Church was particularly troubling for Machiavelli, as he believed the political utility of religion was in keeping society unified but he saw that it was having the opposite effect in Italy (Machiavelli 1976, I.12). The institutional corruption of the Catholic Church, particularly the issue of indulgences, is what inspired Martin Luther to write his *95 theses*, setting off the Protestant Reformation (Luther 1917).¹⁷¹ However, Machiavelli and Martin Luther both believed not only in the importance of religion, but in the importance of religious institutions. In order for religion to provide guidance (whether in spiritual terms or in political life) it needed professionals and infrastructure, as well as the faith of the common people.

There are a number of different ways to think of corrupt religious institutions.¹⁷² Bruce Buchan (2012) points out two dimensions of Machiavelli’s discussion of corruption: the

¹⁷¹ Theses 45 and 50 highlight both the religious problems and the secular effects that issuing indulgences had, according to Martin Luther. “45. Christians are to be taught that he who sees a man in need, and passes him by, and gives [his money] for pardons, purchases not the indulgences of the pope, but the indignation of God....50. Christians are to be taught that if the pope knew the exactions of the pardon-preachers, he would rather that St. Peter’s church should go to ashes, than that it should be built up with the skin, flesh and bones of his sheep” (Luther 1917).

¹⁷² Buchan notes that corruption “is most often used today to describe those activities, such as bribery or other private inducements offered to determine public decisions, in which public officials violate rules or laws for the sake of private, usually pecuniary, gain” (Buchan 2012). He sees a neoliberal logic to this approach to corruption, which threatens the ‘proper’ separation between the state and the economy and imposes additional costs on political transactions. Corruption in this sense is only possible for state officials and those seeking to subvert the law with offers of financial advantage. On the neo-liberal model, church corruption is as vacuous a term as theatrical corruption, since what is paid to the church (or the theatre) is a reflection of the market value of what the consumer hopes to get from it.

attendant loss of discipline (or *virtu*) and the sacrifice of public interest for private interest. The second feature of corruption speaks to the concerns of Spinoza and Rousseau, that divisive religious language was caused by priests' private desire for wealth and prestige. In the first sense, "corruption is used in the context of describing the falling away of regimes from a former glory.... Conquests and imperial greatness are won by virtue; decline is brought about by the decadence that greatness facilitates, leading to an indulgence in excess and luxury or a loss of discipline among the citizens" (80). Buchan notes that this is not merely a theory of political corruption, but is meant to apply to all the institutions of the republic, as well as to the people at large. The problem Machiavelli hoped to address was how to pursue policies that would make the state strong and prosperous, when strength and prosperity inevitably led to corruption and decline. The solution he proposed was a set of harsh laws and institutions (such as those of Rome) to keep the people always striving for more in spite of their prior success and prosperity.¹⁷³

In addition to his general theory of corruption, caused by decadence and indulgence, Machiavelli identifies two mechanisms that facilitate corruption for the sake of private interest: one amongst political leaders and one amongst the clergy. For political leaders, the right of inheritance is corrupting: for once "they began to make the prince hereditary instead of electing him, his heirs soon began to degenerate as compared with their ancestors, and, forsaking virtuous deeds, considered that princes have nought else to do but to surpass other men in extravagance, lasciviousness, and every other form of licentiousness" (Machiavelli 1976, I.2). For the clergy,

¹⁷³ Machiavelli aims to point out "under what strict discipline [Rome] was placed by the laws made by Romulus, Numa, and others, and that, in consequence, neither its fertile situation, the convenience afforded by the sea, its frequent victories, nor the greatness of its empire, were for many centuries able to corrupt it, but that these laws kept it so rich in virtue that there has never been any other city or any other republic so well adorned" (Machiavelli 1976, I.1).

corruption occurs when priests attempt to twist religious doctrine to suit the powerful.

Machiavelli noted that when people realized that religion was being misused in this way, they become angry and either rebellious or cynical.¹⁷⁴ This undermines the power of religion to unify the people by directing them towards the common good.

Machiavelli focuses on the long-term effects of corruption and sees history as corroborating the endless threat that it posed to states. Since his goal was not a short-lived republic, he needed to develop a theory of forestalling corruption. He develops two. The first is the ‘return to first principles’ and the second is the ‘mixed-constitution’.¹⁷⁵ Machiavelli devotes a full chapter to the need of religious and political institutions to return to their original principles in order to survive. He writes: “For at the start religious institutions, republics and kingdoms have in all cases some good in them, to which their early reputation and progress is due. But since in process of time this goodness is corrupted, such a body must of necessity die unless something happens which brings it up to the mark” (Machiavelli 1976, III.1). He notes that institutions undergo such a process either by an “external event” such as conquest, or by “intrinsic good sense”, such as reform. He cites Rome being sacked by the Gauls as an example of an external event – only by being sacked was Rome forced to re-examine its constitution and return to its origins.¹⁷⁶ The negative effects of bad choices can motivate institutions to reform themselves. There is an evolutionary appeal to this argument, as governments that do not stand on solid foundations are more liable to crumble once they make a bad decision, whereas those

¹⁷⁴ “But when the oracles began to say what was pleasing to the powerful, and this deception was discovered by the people, they became incredulous and inclined to subvert any good institution” (Machiavelli 1976, I.12). Buchan notes the increasingly monetary interpretation of corruption, first developed by Cicero (Buchan 2012).

¹⁷⁵ The first relies on institutional reform within a religion and the second points to some of the reasons that religious institutions persist in the political state even in his secular, modern vision of it.

¹⁷⁶ We can find modern examples of such a ‘return to first principles’, including: the English Civil War, the American Civil War, the American *Civil Rights Act* of 1964, or the passage of the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

states that are better constituted persist over time. A state possesses virtue to the extent that it can forestall such revolutions through good laws and organization, but corruption will eventually force it to return to the good principles that originally gave it purpose.

The second means of forestalling corruption is the mixed constitution. Following Polybius' theory of cyclical governments, Machiavelli believed that a constitution which mixed the different forms of government together was best (Machiavelli 1976, I.2). A government that properly balanced the power of the prince, the power of the aristocracy, and the power of the people (as he argued was the case in Rome) would best be able to forestall corruption. Such a government relied on a dynamic equilibrium between each of the classes to keep the others honest and hard working.

Machiavelli's theory of corruption helps to explain the tendency for religious institutions to become corrupt and anticipates many of the changes that were coming to the Catholic Church. Martin Luther originally hoped to simply reform the corruption of the Catholic Church. His 95 *Theses* begins by attacking the belief that salvation could be bought.¹⁷⁷ Only when papist supporters insisted that indulgences were validated by the infallibility of the pope did Luther begin to question the papacy's authority over issues of dogma (R. Pascal 1938). Instead, he began to invest the Imperial-run Council of the Church with authority over dogmatic issues until 1519, during the Leipzig debate with Johanne Eck, when he was forced to place all religious authority in the Bible (*ibid.*). Despite his split with the Catholic Church, Luther worried about the effect of putting the power to interpret the Bible into the hands of individuals. "Inspiration, he stated after hurrying down to Wittenberg to suppress the Enthusiasts, came sometimes from the

¹⁷⁷ For Martin Luther, the Church was important not because it had the power to grant divine absolution in exchange for money (which he thought to be heretical), but because the Church proclaims the possibility of divine absolution. "Nevertheless, the remission and participation [in the blessings of the Church] which are granted by the pope are in no way to be despised, for they are, as I have said, the declaration of divine remission" (Luther 1917, XXXVIII).

devil; men would do better to trust in Luther than their own intuitions. Reform of the Church should take place only after taking counsel with the rulers” (R. Pascal 1938, 344). For Luther, as for many other religious reformers, the institutional structure of religion was indispensable to its proper functioning. Notwithstanding his critique of the Pope, as the fifteenth century Catholic Church had become corrupt, he never thought that the Church infrastructure could, or ought to be, dispensed with. This illustrates that religious institutions are capable of reform and, when they are unwilling to do so, dissatisfied members can leave to join other religions or to begin their own churches. The scale of hypocrisy in the Catholic Church certainly made it a worthy candidate for reform. When it was unwilling to do so (in part due to the forms of decadence that made church offices lucrative) it was subject to critique and abandonment.

2.2 Salutory features of religious institutions.

Machiavelli’s understanding that a mixed constitution would forestall corruption illuminates why religious institutions can sometimes provide salutary functions for society. In contrast to Locke’s theory of the need for a division of powers, which was based on the private individual’s “human frailty” in making and executing laws to the public advantage, Machiavelli’s theory is a class based theory.¹⁷⁸ Locke’s theory rests on a notion of human nature, whereas Machiavelli’s rests on the nature of political societies. For Locke, the private interests of individuals might lead them to benefit themselves at the expense of society, unless the law

¹⁷⁸ “And because it may be too great a temptation to humane frailty apt to grasp at Power, for the same Persons who have the Power of making Laws, to have also in their hands the power to execute them, whereby they make, and suit the Law, both in its making and in its execution, to their own private advantage, and thereby come to have a distinct interest from the rest of the Community, contrary to the end of Society and Government: Therefore in well order’d Commonwealths, where the good of the whole is so considered, as it ought, the Legislative Power is put into the hands of divers Persons who duly Assembled, have by themselves, or jointly with others, a Power to make Laws, which when they have done, being separated again, they are themselves subject to the Laws, they have made; which is a new and near tie upon them, to take care, that they make them for the publick good” (Locke 1690, 364).

applies equally to those with governmental authority and those without it respectively.¹⁷⁹ For Machiavelli, the different parts of government were meant to represent class interests. His worry about corruption is that a particular class of people will represent the interests solely of that class, rather than the interests of all of society. These may appear to be subtle differences, but the contrast reveals that conflicts existing between the interests that different groups have in society (Machiavelli) are different to a conflict between an individual's private interests and their public capacity (Locke).

Machiavelli is concerned primarily with class cleavages in his culturally and religiously homogenous state. If we look at different religious or ethnic affiliations as representative of similar sorts of groups with particular interests (e.g. ability to participate in society, recognition by the national culture, etc.), we can see how having institutions to balance their interests against one another can help to keep each one of them from wielding too much control in society. When religious groups are oppressed or ignored by the dominant culture or state institutions, their religious institutions become important representatives of their collective interests, as Machiavelli theorised. The greater willingness by ideological liberals (as opposed to communists) to accept the legitimacy of such religious institutions, may help to explain liberal states' greater ability to weather the resurgence of religion in contemporary politics. In many places, the liberal demand that such 'toleration' exists only so long as religious groups stay out of politics, is being renegotiated. I believe that recognising and valuing the ways that religions help to balance some of the unjust bureaucratic and class powers of the secular state is not only

¹⁷⁹ According to Locke, the supreme authority is subject to the law and members owe their obedience only to the "publick Will", such that when the supreme authority breaks the law, the members of that society no longer owe her obedience (Locke 1690, 368).

useful but essential to navigating this renegotiation. Some religious criticism may even point out injustices in the state that persist in spite of secular attempts to address them.

Locke's division of interest into public versus private also has important ramifications for understanding the relationship between states and religion. Where religion has been separated from the state, its private nature has allowed it to form institutions without needing to go through the bureaucratic channels of the state. For example – it is much easier for an immigrant community to found a local church than it is to have the government build them a community centre or integrate elements of their specific cultural heritage into the local school curriculum. This is especially true when the immigrant community lacks the political power to influence state policy or call on political elites for their fair share of public goods. Since the state and civil society have appropriated many institutional functions formerly conducted by religious organizations, religions have had to adapt themselves to modern social conditions. Religious institutions continue to perform functions that the state does not. In Toronto, I live between three churches all of which are ethnically denominated (Chinese Presbyterian, Ukrainian Orthodox, and Portuguese Catholic). Their role in connecting their diaspora groups with one another and providing a sense of connection to their country of origin are an important part of church experience. Religious organizations in Canada sponsor many of the refugees who emigrate here every year.¹⁸⁰ Phillip Connor and Matthias Koenig (2014) conducted a national study on the impact of religious attendance on educational and employment opportunities of recent

¹⁸⁰ Lifeline Syria states that: “While many SAHs [Special Agreement Holder's, i.e. organizations that the Canadian government authorizes to sponsor refugees] are affiliated with religious organizations in Canada. They offer protection to refugees solely on the basis of humanitarian need and have a long track record of offering help to people of all faiths” (Lifeline-Syria 2015). I know a group of secular academics who delayed getting a SAH because they found it difficult to find a SAH that was ‘secular’ and one member expressed distrust of working with a ‘religious’ organization. This points to both a ‘gap’ that sometimes exists in the ability of secular institutions to meet local needs, as well as a certain distrust of religious institutions *qua* religious that is sometimes held by secularists.

immigrants to Canada. They drew on work by Fona and Alba (2008) comparing religion and integration in the US and Europe, which found that religion served as a ‘bridge’ for immigrants in the US, but a ‘barrier’ in Europe. They note that “the ‘bridging mechanism operates through the social resources embedded in religious organizations, the ‘barrier’ mechanism presumes religion to constitute a diacritical marker of ethnic or cultural difference” (Connor and Koenig 2014). Their study concluded that:

religion seems to operate as a bridge for most immigrants seeking to make a better life in Canada, but at the same time as a barrier for religious minorities....And, although findings do point to some kind of religious participation benefit for immigrant integration, it is small in size and does not provide the socio-economic gain needed for religious minorities to match native-born achievement (Connor and Koenig 2014, 308).¹⁸¹

Religious institutions often perform welfare activities and are able to support those who’ve fallen through the cracks of the state. Moreover, state institutions are frequently navigated bureaucratically, whereas churches fulfill similar roles in more personal ways. Bureaucracy has the benefit of functioning impersonally (at least theoretically). Welfare, health care, or a child tax benefit, for example – are meant to be opportunities that are equally available to everyone, regardless of their personal characteristics (beyond their membership in a certain class of persons – having no job, having a child, being a citizen, etc.).¹⁸² The ways in which

¹⁸¹ Connor and Koenig note that their data was too limited to draw definite conclusions – both because of the time since the study was conducted (2002) and the lack of data on second generation Canadians (particularly those belonging to Eastern religions). However, they do argue that their research has shown that the Canadian context is significantly different from either the American context (where religion was generally a bridge) or the European context (where it served as a barrier). Furthermore, they note that their observations lead them to believe that the factors that make a religion a ‘bridge’ might be independent from those that make it a ‘barrier’. It may, for example, be a bridge by creating connections between recent immigrants and those who’ve been settled for longer, while at the same time serving as a barrier to greater integration with the broader community (whether as the result of reinforcing existing communal attachments at the expense of attachments to the broader, national culture of Canada, or as the result of discrimination against them by Canadian popular culture).

¹⁸² Recently, the poverty reduction group Vibrant Communities Calgary began focusing on getting low income families to do their taxes as a means of poverty reduction. Low income earners file their taxes less often than other demographics, despite the fact that tax breaks often make filing for them quite lucrative (relatively speaking). The national charity, Prosper Canada, lists the following as barriers to tax filing by low income earners: complexity, low awareness of benefits available, lack of mailed tax forms, low computer access, low literacy, lack of access to advice, newcomer status, low self-confidence and trust, difficulty assembling documents (Bakx 2016).

churches deliver similar opportunities are not neutral – people are expected to perform their faith. There are often religious burdens placed on them, such as moral conformity to a particular norm fostered by their religious community. But certain gaps left by other public systems (e.g. education, health, and politics) are often filled by religious institutions. Even if all the secular functions of a church were to be adopted by the state, these places of worship would still serve as important carriers of cultural values. Because of the traditional role that synagogues, churches, mosques, and other places of worship have played in community formation, as places of gathering, those more comfortable with interpersonal community connections often turn to them, rather than the state.

Religious institutions also make great gathering places for ethnic minorities (in addition to religious minorities) in a secular state. African Americans have been disproportionately impacted by American states' funding cuts to mental health services, adoption of harsh mandatory minimum sentences, and aggressive pursuit of non-violent drug offenders, resulting in soaring incarceration rates among them (Collier 2014). Meanwhile, Black churches in America have been, and continue to be, important sites of organization, resistance, and mourning in the wake of police violence against the African-American community.¹⁸³ Such cases are not confined to North America. Places of worship have become important sites of resistance against a number of secular regimes that persecute minority populations.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Moore et al.'s recent study on the role that Black Churches can play in reducing violence against young Black males did an over-view of existing scholarship on the institutional importance of Black Churches for young Black males. "For young Black males perennially exposed to police shooting and brutality, the Black church has been pinpointed as an indispensable institution that enhances positive youth development and 'develop[s] a moral compass for adulthood' (Williams, 2003, p. 20), provides collective coping (Constantine, Donnelly, & Myers, 2002), offers a center for a sense of control and a place to reduce violence-related strains and stresses (Jan & Johnson, 2003, 2004), and above all serves as a mediator, or go-between, between the police and young Black males (Braga, Hureau, & Winship, 2008; Brunson, Braga, Hureau, & Pegram, 2014)" (Moore, et al. 2016, 260).

¹⁸⁴ The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt rose to power largely because they were one of the only institutional bodies that had been resisting the illiberal Mubarak regime prior to Arab Spring. When Arab Spring started and many secularly-minded Egyptians took to the streets (often for the first time), many of them were shocked that only the

Even in the most liberal societies, governments have begun to heavily regulate who is allowed citizenship. Becoming a member of the Christian or Muslim community is an issue primarily of faith. In many instances it is merely a matter of attending an institution of faith and saying ‘I believe’. Becoming a citizen of Canada, on the other hand, is a highly regulated practice. If you are living in a state and adhering to all other laws, you can still be arrested and sent back to where you came from (sometimes even if there is a threat to your life there). You can be asked to work for less than minimum wage with the threat of being sent back if you upset your employer. You are required to obtain documents to prove your status. These documents are often expensive and extremely time consuming to procure. You must take a test in order to become a citizen – a test that can arbitrarily be made more difficult.¹⁸⁵ You must be able to speak one of the national languages of the country in which you seek citizenship. All the while, your identity relative to the hegemonic identity of the state is subjected to scrutiny. While having a legal identity that comes with a series of rights and obligations vis-à-vis the state seems quite natural to some, to others less familiar with how to navigate the state’s bureaucracy, it can seem like a series of bizarre rituals designed purposefully to exclude them.

Religious institutions, like secular state institutions, need to be “measured by universal standards” and ought to be capable of “new growth and insight” (Bellah, Robert Bellah.com 1991). That the structures of religious institutions frequently lack clear mechanisms to accomplish these things is troubling. However, sometimes the state mechanisms that are meant

Muslim Brotherhood were in a position to challenge the ‘Independent’ party of Ahmed Shafik (who was appointed Prime Minister by Hosni Mubarak shortly before he stepped down) in the elections that followed. Religious organizations have resisted secular state authority in a number of other Middle-Eastern countries, often blending issues of social justice with conservative religious attitudes. This phenomenon is not only a Muslim one and Liberation Theology stands as an important example of Catholic organization against state oppression.

¹⁸⁵ The Star reported: “Failure rates for immigrants writing citizenship tests have soared since the spring, when tougher questions and revamped rules made it harder for newcomers to become Canadian” (Beeby 2010).

to make state institutions respond to rational and democratic control are the very things that exclude certain portions of the population. Insofar as religious institutions function to provide social services to those who need more than they receive from the state, they're welcome and even necessary additions to communities.

3. Religious Traditions

Religion is often associated with tradition because most believers follow faiths that are extremely old. It is hard to ignore the fact that over the last few hundred years of scientific and social developments, religious believers and organizations have often opposed themselves to the image of 'progress' that secularists champion.¹⁸⁶ The 'culture wars' discussed in chapter two are only one example of secular forces (science) marginalizing religious cosmologies. A recent example of religious traditions coming up against social progress are the debates in America over expanding the definition of marriage. When American conservatives state that 'traditional marriage is under attack', it begs the question – why is traditional marriage any better than modern (more inclusive) marriage? Tradition is seen as a good in and of itself, and the values of the past are equated with prosperity; the erosion of those values is seen as an attack aimed at the heart of the religious community. Since tradition is, by definition, an uncritical acceptance of established norms, it seems obvious that the promotion of progress would come at the expense of tradition. Progressives often feel that, if those who value tradition for its own sake are upset by this, it is merely a sign of the entrenched privileges they have enjoyed up to the present. Nevertheless, traditions make up an important part of social life and one ought to be mindful of the tendency to uncritically accept one's own traditions—such as national holidays – and subject

¹⁸⁶ By 'progress' I mean the notion that societies have steadily been modernizing and improving. Progressives frequently admit that this is an uneven development and that there are setbacks, but overall believe that there has been a steady advance towards a better future.

those of others to criticism. Every society, whether secular or religious, relies on traditions to anchor their members' beliefs and practices.

A socio-legal case for the importance of traditional values was made by Lord Patrick Devlin in response to the Wolfenden report of 1957, which recommended the decriminalization of homosexuality in the United Kingdom. Devlin opposed the proposal using a social unity argument. He held that society was a community of morals and that, as such, behaviour that society deemed to be immoral was liable to criminal sanctions (Devlin 2008). Maintaining what H.L.A. Hart called the 'disintegration thesis', Devlin argued that if the moral fabric of society was abandoned, then society would begin to decay as well.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, he notes that "up till a century or so ago, no one thought it worth distinguishing between religion and morals" (Devlin 2008, 289). Morality stands in as a secularized form of religion for Devlin. Christianity, he believed, was not a sufficient basis for the law, as the divine law and the secular law had long been separated in Britain. However, he argues that the law "has got there because it is Christian, but it remains there because it is built into the house in which we live and could not be removed without bringing it down" (Devlin 2008, 288). He believed that it was possible to maintain a society without a common religion but not possible to maintain it without a common view of morality. Religious values are recast as secular ones, with 'morality' taking the place of divine command. This is not a "critical morality" based on principles, but a "popular morality", based on the feelings of moral disgust that hold in a given society, which are held on the basis of tradition. Regardless of whether Devlin is correct that we need the law to sanction those who act

¹⁸⁷ "For society is not something that is kept together physically; it is held by the invisible bonds of common thought. If the bonds were too far relaxed the members would drift apart. A common morality is part of the bondage. The bondage is part of the price of society; and mankind, which needs society, must pay its price" (Devlin 2008, 288-9).

against ‘popular morality’, governments around the world pass laws that uphold popular moral sentiments at the expense of critical moral principles.¹⁸⁸

H.L.A. Hart’s response to Devlin rightly notes that all societies are constantly changing their popular morality and that this happens without the necessary collapse of society.

Furthermore, there were times when a popularly held moral belief was so pernicious (such as slavery being acceptable in the ante-bellum American South), that the disintegration of such a society was not in fact a bad thing (Hart 2008). Gerald Dworkin (1999) argues that, despite being wrong about the immorality of homosexuality, Devlin is correct that in some instances the law can (and ought to) condemn actions that violate our collective sense of morality. This is because “criminal law is an institution whose central rationales include making it less likely that acts that ought not to be done are not done and serving as a vehicle for condemning those who do what ought not to be done. The existence of principled reasons for ruling out (in advance) the criminal process as a means of discouragement therefore seems quite implausible” (945). In a democratic society, this is even more frequently the case. The critical principles of liberalism (such as Mill’s ‘harm principle’) sometimes clash with the popular morality that a majority of people in society hold. Devlin seems to be correct that the jury system supports the idea that “the moral judgement of society must be something about which any twelve men or women drawn at random might after discussion be expected to agree” (Devlin 2008, 292). This does not mean that we must criminalize every action considered immoral by the majority. Dworkin gives the example of ‘free

¹⁸⁸ One example of this is the War on Drugs. When I was in Egypt, shortly after the Muslim Brotherhood won a majority in elections, a common (and justified) worry was that they were going to enact laws based on their conservative, religious principles. The most frequently mentioned issues in this respect were laws respecting women wearing the veil and restrictions on alcohol. This second is interesting, because limits on alcohol consumption were considered by many liberals to be unjust and religiously motivated. In North America, thousands of people are in prison due to non-violent drug offenses, but even when we question whether such laws ought to exist, we rarely challenge the prerogative of the state in enacting them in the same way as laws prohibiting activities that are culturally acceptable to us.

speech’ as a principle that legally protects a certain class of actions that most people consider to be immoral (1999, 945). He believes that it might be legitimate to legislate against certain forms of speech (“denials of the holocaust, racial insults”), but that there are reasons (including policy as well as principles) to keep the U.S. government from interfering with such speech. Canada has hate speech laws, whereas the United States does not. According to Dworkin, we cannot necessarily settle the debate between two such policies with *a priori* principles.¹⁸⁹ Every state legislates morality in some ways – whether in the form of marriage laws, laws against public nudity, or how far the principle of ‘freedom of speech’ extends (even in America there are limits).

It would also be a mistake to dismiss the value of tradition itself – for at least two reasons. First, there is no society that is entirely free of its traditions, nor any society that can claim its laws are completely free from its own traditional particularities. Nation-states safeguard their traditions as vigorously as religious adherents. In the previous chapter, I showed how the development of nation-states was historically linked with the development of national-histories and traditions, often by secularizing religious objects and ideas. Secular, as well as religious communities, are proud of their traditions and fiercely resist putting any sort of restrictions on them. Many secular countries have legislated paid religious holidays – including France and the United States, which are often considered paradigmatic examples of secular states. Failing to take into account the traditions of other, minority practitioners leads to feelings of alienation.

¹⁸⁹ He concludes that if liberals want to argue against laws criminalizing homosexuality, they ought to engage in the difficult (and perhaps more important) work of explaining why homosexuality isn’t immoral, rather than the argument that the government has no right to legislate such things (G. Dworkin 1999, 946). Within the LGBTQ2 movement there has been a shift in recent years between a focus on the principle of ‘keeping the state out of the bedroom’ and using the state to enforce the recognition of alternative interpretations of sex and gender.

Traditions are sometimes the last thing that an oppressed group can hold onto as a reminder of their collective identity. Canada has only just begun to acknowledge the cultural genocide it perpetrated against First Nations peoples. Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel write in 'Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism,' that contemporary settlers are no longer trying to eradicate Indigenous peoples as bodies, but rather "as *peoples* through the erasure of the histories and geographies that provide the foundation for Indigenous cultural identities and sense of self" (Alfred and Corntassel 2005, 598). While the Catholic Church played a large role in the operations and suffering of the children forced into the residential schools system, it is the secular state that saw the residential school system as a means of forcibly assimilating and 'civilizing' the children interned there. In doing so, Canadian settlers adopted the historicist logic of Mill, discussed in the previous chapter. If Indigenous peoples were ever to participate in Canadian society, it would have to be after a period of education. Their traditional beliefs were seen as an impediment to accomplishing this. While we may not want the traditions of the past to keep us from adopting better social arrangements, we must also be careful not to trample one group's entire way of life in a misguided attempt to 'improve' them. When cultural genocide has subjected the traditions of certain peoples, such as attempts of the residential schools in Canada to end the practice of indigenous traditions, it seems appropriate that reparations involve greater inclusion and recognition of those traditions by secular authorities. While Canada has begun the process of acknowledging the cultural genocide that it perpetrated against its Indigenous peoples, there is still widespread resistance to integrating elements of Indigenous culture into the public culture. Recently, a mother in British Columbia objected to the ceremonial act of smudging on the grounds that this was a religious ceremony and therefore should not be allowed in a public school. She claims this is a violation

her children's right to freedom of religion guaranteed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Niigaan Sinclair, professor of native studies, states that: "I think that the most important message of smudging is that it recognizes the power and the life in the earth, and that we're related to that" (Troian 2016). While national anthems, European history and Christian religious holidays are regular parts of the secular schooling experience, they promote a cultural identity that excludes indigenous people and ignores their experiences. If their attempts to have their traditions included in school curricula are denied on the basis that they are forcing 'religious' beliefs on the children, this inequity serves to underline how the secular beliefs of the colonial majority have been forced onto them. Reconciliation between colonizer and colonized in Canada may therefore require the acceptance of indigenous traditions as part of the mainstream of Canadian political culture.

In the above discussion, I've accepted that there is a strong relationship between religion and tradition. However, it would be a mistake to connect religion too strongly with tradition rather than progress. Many religions were seen as extremely progressive in their early days, and no religion has been immune to the pressures of reform. The Reformation is important in the history of Christianity, as well as the development of secularism.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, religious critiques during the enlightenment were directed against corrupt aristocrats as well as Church officials. Archbishop Romero's opposition to the El Salvadorian government's use of assassination and torture to prevent social change is a modern example of this happening. As Casanova comments in his examination of the public resurgence of religion in the modern world, "throughout the [1980s] religion showed its Janus face, as the carrier not only of the exclusive,

¹⁹⁰ Elizabeth Shakman Hurd offers an excellent description of the two interpretive traditions of secularism: laicism and Judeo-Christian. The former has understood secularism largely in terms of a separation of religion from politics, while the latter has been understood primarily in terms of accommodation (Hurd 2008).

particularist, and primordial identities but also of inclusive, universalist, and transcending ones” (Casanova 1994, 4). He notes the influence that Franz Fanon’s *Les Damnés de la Terre* had on the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and the importance of liberation theology in the resurgence of Catholicism since Vatican II. Further instances of religious principles entering into political life once more abound. They include the highly principled and religious content in Martin Luther King Jr.’s *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, Malcolm X’s rejection of Christian principles (such as turning the other cheek) in favour of the Nation of Islam’s doctrine of radical self-protection, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s religious use of ‘forgiveness’ in the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission¹⁹¹.

Ultimately, this capacity of religious traditions to reform themselves shows that religious traditions are much more sensitive to context than is typically assumed. Sometimes traditions with lineages of oppression are capable of profound transformation, often in subtle ways. Sudipta Kaviraj offers a helpful example that highlights the many factors at play in religious observance that disrupt the simple narratives of secularisation that we’ve become used to.

Let me use an example of two women from the same family in England. A young woman in a London University college wore the *hijab* to cover her hair; but mentioned that her mother, a modernist woman who migrated from Pakistan, never wore it, and considered it oppressive. It is true that the older woman’s rejection of the veil and the younger woman’s re-adoption confounds the regular expectations of a simple secularisation theory, but these decisions are not difficult to understand historically. In fact, these two cases of decision about dress are in one sense quite similar. An assertive individual, the mother showed her defiance of patriarchy in south Asian society by refusing the veil. The daughter reacted to her perception of neglect and hostility in British society by defiantly adopting a mark of Islamic identity. Out of the cluster of identity-attributes that the two

¹⁹¹ The use that religious principles can be in transforming secular political institutions can be seen in the way that Archbishop Desmond Tutu mobilized Christian morality both in opposing apartheid and in reconstructing the country afterwards (Tutu 2014). King cites the disobedience of early Christians – sometimes at the cost of their lives – to Roman laws as models of emulation when spreading “the gospel of freedom” (King Jr 1963). By contrast, when asked about the Christian and Gandhian non-violent civil-disobedience movements, Malcolm X responded: “Christian? Gandhian? I don’t go for anything that’s non-violent and turn-the-other-cheekish” (X and Spellman 2005).

women possessed, which were quite similar, each chose to foreground a particular one in response to her environment (Kaviraj 2010, 353).

It may be that a given tradition that has taken on a very conservative set of values can be re-deployed in a manner that maintains its cultural heritage but subjects its meaning and value to critical standards. In a similar line of reasoning, Saba Mahmood (2005) conducted a study of the women's piety movement in Egypt and found that understanding the feminist potential of the movement involved putting aside some of the cultural bias in her feminist upbringing, including attitudes surrounding the liberal autonomous subject.¹⁹²

Traditional authority is often tied to religion. Sometimes religious traditions hold people back, such as when they use them to oppress women or exclude non-believers. Other times they preserve what is most important to us and connect us to other members of our community through a shared moral fabric. Religions need not be opposed to progress and much of the opposition between tradition and progress can be overcome with critical interpretation. The rise of critical morality has certainly precipitated a backlash from certain religious groups who see themselves as guardians of important traditions. However, religions have also been behind progressive movements that have challenged the hegemony of the state or the neutrality of a certain set of cultural values, as in the case of indigenous spiritual traditions in Canada.

4. Religion's connection to Emotional Enthusiasm

Bertrand Russell once commented: "I do not think that the real reason why many people accept religion has anything to do with argumentation. They accept religion on emotional

¹⁹² She states that: "if the ability to effect change in the world and in oneself is historically and culturally specific..., then the meaning and sense of agency cannot be fixed in advance, but must emerge through an analysis of the particular concepts that enable specific modes of being, responsibility, and effectivity. Viewed in this way, what may appear to be a case of deplorable passivity and docility from a progressivist point of view, may actually be a form of agency – but one that can be understood only from the discourses and structures of subordination that create the conditions of its enactment" (Mahmood 2005, 15).

grounds” (Russell 1996). Many believe that religion’s continued relevance is due, not to any actual or rational use it provides, but because it is able to elicit deep emotional reactions. What I want to discuss here, however, is not how emotions serve as a bulwark of religious belief, but rather the ways in which the deeply emotional expressions of religion are often perceived as a threat to modern secular values and the public authority of the state. Early critiques of religious enthusiasts worried that religion amplified the importance believers place on certain issues and that it therefore makes it more difficult (if not impossible) for them to come to a reasonable compromise. While there are certainly times that this is a valid concern, to dismiss the emotional reactions of believers too quickly often equates to dismissing (or ignoring) the ways in which such emotional enthusiasm is the natural product of political oppression.

In the next sections, I begin with an explanation of this kind of criticism, particularly the philosophical critique of the ‘religious enthusiasts’. I acknowledge that there are times when such worries are justified, however we should not dismiss religious appeals to emotion too quickly. There was a flurry of this kind of criticism – directed at Muslims after the Danish Cartoon controversy in 2005. In the following section, I argue, following Mahmood (2009), that Muslim reactions to the cartoons are better understood in terms of moral injury rather than as a debate over freedom of speech. Furthermore, I argue that the cartoons themselves cannot be understood without looking at the context of the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and ‘Western’ worries about immigration. I do this by examining a similar controversy over the cartoon *South Park* which aired images of the Mohammed both prior to these wars as well as after them.

4.1 The Trouble with religious enthusiasts.

Religious enthusiasm is charged with subverting peoples' ability to make rational decisions by making highly emotional appeals to religious adherents. Spinoza remarks of his own day, "I know how obstinately those prejudices stick in the mind that the heart has embraced in the form of piety" (2007, 12). Modern forms of this include the intensity of anti-abortion activists and protests in Ontario, Canada against reforming the sexual education curriculum. The crux of the argument is that religion increases the stakes in political debates to an irrational extent. To do something 'religiously' (according to this line of thinking) is to do it with such devotion that practice extends beyond reasonable levels of action. In contrast to the emotional enthusiasm of the common people, Spinoza (2007) extolled the virtues of philosophers, who were able to think rationally.

Originally developed as a theological critique, the critique of religious enthusiasm played an important role in both the developments of Protestantism and secularism. Michael Heyd's book on the subject describes the earliest criticism of enthusiasts as originating in the low-countries in the seventeenth century. "The enthusiasts were characterized by their theological attitudes (apocalyptic expectations), by the claims to be divinely authorized in airing their views, and by their external behaviours (physical ecstasies, convulsions)" (Heyd 1995, 16). The opening created by the Reformation for alternate connections with God meant that new sects were developing across Europe. The private connection with God that the Reformation established created problems for Protestants, who wanted some degree of uniform worship, as well as Catholics.¹⁹³ Political philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were extremely

¹⁹³ Richard Tuck said this about the attitude of early Protestant reformers to the need for clerical interpretations of Scripture: "As systematized by Calvin in particular, their ideas did not countenance a wholly individualist interpretation of Scripture: the ministers of the existing Church still had a special authority over the public promulgation of the Gospel message. But they were vested with this authority not because of some supernatural link

troubled by these developments, as they were symptomatic of the religious turmoil that gripped Europe during the wars of religion. Spinoza believed that the ‘desperate straits’ people often found themselves in caused them to fluctuate between ‘hope and fear’ in a way that left them open to such political manipulation. Thus, Spinoza believed that “fear is the root from which superstition is born, maintained and nourished” (Spinoza 2007, 4). Yet fear and pious belief in superstition seemed inalienably associated with the ‘common people’, such that he despaired of their enlightenment.

I know it is as impossible to rid the common people of superstition as it is to rid them of fear. I know that the constancy of the common people is obstinacy, and that they are not governed by reason but swayed by impulse in approving or finding fault. I do not therefore invite the common people and those who are afflicted by the same feelings they are [i.e. who think theologically], to read these things (Spinoza 2007, 12).

The Enlightenment simultaneously championed a version of religion tied to rationality and good governance while denigrating a version of religion that was associated more with emotionality and the superstitions of the common people. Saint Augustine’s comment that the authority of religion was greater than that of moral philosophy and that following religious example was more in line with human nature than philosophic contemplation is both a frightening and valuable insight.¹⁹⁴ Religious authority more easily sways people than critical moral reflection, because religion’s social content is tied much more closely to popular morality than to critical morality.

with Christ himself through the apostolic succession, but through the continued policing by the ministers of one another’s interpretations of Scripture, and the generation of some agreed (or at least concerted) interpretations to impose upon the general public. It was, one might say, more like the authority of a professional body of experts than the authority of a Catholic priesthood; but it was still intended to foreclose general lay debate about the interpretation of Scripture” (Tuck 2011).

¹⁹⁴ “That the Suggestions of Philosophers are Precluded from Having Any Moral Effect, Because They Have Not the Authority Which Belongs to Divine Instruction, and Because Man’s Natural Bias to Evil Induces Him Rather to Follow the Examples of the [Roman] Gods Than to Obey the Precepts of Men” (Augustine 1890, II.7).

The communal aspects of religion and the mimetic emotional experiences of worshippers mean that religious emotions easily make their way into the public sphere. ‘Collective effervescence’ gives religious enthusiasm a communal dimension in a way that causes mass-action to become directed by peoples’ emotions rather than their rational faculties. Charles Taylor links the ‘collective rituals’ that were key to Durkheim’s concept of collective effervescence, to modern formations of what he calls the ‘festive’. The festive “is an important continuing form of religious and quasi-religious life in our own day. It has to be part of any description of the place of the spiritual in our society” (Taylor 2007, 469). Taylor believes that the notion of the ‘festive’ ought to be understood in broad terms. It involves large numbers of people coming together, but also breaks with the everyday routine of regular life in a way that is meant to put people in touch with the sacred. He ties it to events like *Carnivale*, but it could also be connected to national holidays and even protest culture.

Religious protests appear problematic because they place an overabundance of importance on certain values. They can cause political turmoil. Religious enthusiasm is what allows elite members of religious institutions to manipulate their followers. People are often willing to sacrifice certain secular values (e.g. a more egalitarian system of taxation) in exchange for their religious values (e.g. restrictions on abortion). The greater problem is that religious adherents will sometimes try to force views held by only a minority of the population onto everyone. In some cases, like the debates over teaching evolution in schools, there is not even a rational basis for the beliefs being enforced. Moreover, the enthusiasm exhibited by religious protesters gives added weight to their message.

Focusing too much on the seemingly irrational displays of religious enthusiasm gives the impression that all emotions are devoid of rational content and ought to be kept out of politics

altogether. However, it seems neither possible nor desirable to keep emotions out of politics, as the supposed distinction between emotion and reason seems to ignore how psychologically intertwined they are. As many feminist scholars have argued, opposing rationality to emotion is a move frequently employed by elites seeking to delegitimize the anger felt by the oppressed – particularly women. “Not only has reason been contrasted with emotion,” Alison M. Jaggar writes, “but it has also been associated with the mental, the cultural, the universal, the public and the male, whereas emotion has been associated with the irrational, the physical, the natural, the particular, the private and, of course, the female” (Jaggar 1989). I would add religion to the list of that which is associated with emotion more than reason.

Emotional appeals to morality face several obstacles that are pertinent to religion. First, emotions sometimes blunt our ability to recognize the best way to accomplish our goals. For example, sometimes moral condemnation is directed against individuals rather than the systemic practices that lie at the root of the problem. The second problem faced by emotional appeals to morality is that they are vulnerable to quick dismissal, as those who do not share the same emotional attachment to the value in question can find it difficult to empathize. Maria Lugones discusses ‘outlaw emotions’, such as anger, which “are distinguished by their incompatibility with the dominant perceptions and values” (Lugones 1995, 204). Sometimes the tone in which one is speaking is a product of the social pressures that one is experiencing. When someone is in a situation where they are being unfairly treated, but where they know anger will not help them, legitimate feelings of anger can grow and then later explode in ways that are counterproductive to the interests of the angry person. Traffic stops of African-Americans by police, for example, create feelings of anger that cannot be expressed because of the extreme danger of expressing anger at armed police officers at the site of the stop. There are schools in the United States that

have begun teaching students how to safely interact with police so that they are not needlessly shot or arrested (Briquelet 2014) . These feelings can boil over during protests against police shootings of unarmed black men, as was the case in Ferguson, Missouri after the shooting of Michael Brown. White spokespeople in the media have frequently expressed surprise over the ‘extreme’ reaction to the shootings. Such sentiments attempt to dissolve the legitimacy of the anger felt into debates over the tactics used to express that anger. According to Lugones: “We do need to think about the manipulative effects of our own anger. Anger does need to be trained but not necessarily toned down. We need to think what good the anger does us with respect to oppression” (Lugones 1995, 205). Anger might not be the best way to react when one feels alienated and unjustly targeted, but it would be a mistake to dismiss the political significance of that anger.

4.2 The Danish cartoon debate and the ‘South Park’ controversy.

In assessing anger, we would do well to pay attention not only to its object but to the context in which it is expressed. For example, while the reaction that many Muslims had to the cartoons published in *Jyllands-Posten* was motivated by religious principles, it seems that the angry tone of the response, which took many secularists by surprise, was related to broader issues of cultural alienation and Western imperialism.¹⁹⁵ Religious sensibilities may condition our sense of self in such a way as to configure our sensitivity to what Saba Mahmood (2009) calls ‘moral injury’. She notes that Art Spiegelman expressed a certain bewilderment at the intense reaction by Muslims to the cartoons, relative to the far greater injuries of what he calls the “actual violation” of the “truly horrifying” images of torture taking place in Iraq (Mahmood

¹⁹⁵ On September 30th, 2005, the Danish Newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published 12 cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad to challenge what the editors believed was a culture of self-censorship related to the criticism of Islam and depictions of the Prophet. Many Muslims found the tone of the cartoons to be mocking Islam and international protests erupted in response to the printing of them (The Associated Press 2006).

2009, 69). For Spiegelman, this demonstrates the irrationality of religious sentiments. Religious people (where ‘religion’ in this case stands in for Islam) are misled by their beliefs to focus on ‘the magical aura of things unseen’ rather than the real violence of the military occupations going on. In conducting interviews with Muslims over their reaction to the cartoons, Mahmood was “struck by the sense of personal loss expressed by many devout Muslims on hearing about or seeing the cartoons” (Mahmood 2009, 74). While many of them condemned the violence of the protests that followed, they nonetheless expressed feelings of anger and sorrow at the unwillingness of many secular people (including non-religious Pakistanis or Bangladeshis) to understand the hurt that was inflicted by the cartoons. Mahmood explains some of this sense of personal injury as part of the type of identification many Muslims have with the prophet, whose example they hope to follow through the imitation of how he dressed, walked, slept, etc. She notes that to many European Muslims, the cartoons were “a particularly vicious example of the racism they have come to experience from their compatriots in Europe” (Mahmood 2009, 79). Tariq Modood argues: “The cartoons are not just about one individual Muslim per se – just as a cartoon about Moses as a crooked financier would not be about one man but a comment on Jews. And just as the latter would be racist, so are the cartoons in question” (Tariq Modood, quoted in Mahmood 2009, 79). After the Charlie Hebdo massacre Joe Sacco, a cartoonist for the Guardian, published a cartoon ‘On Satire,’ that drew similar parallels with all the visceral force of images. In it, he notes that he can draw a racist depiction of a black man hanging from a tree eating a banana or a Jewish banker counting his money in the entrails of the working class and that both such depictions are protected by freedom of speech. That such critique is lawful does not mean that it is right. Furthermore, if we brush the cartoon of the Jewish banker off as simply a joke in poor taste, he wonders if we would feel the same way in 1933? He asks, tongue in cheek, “what

is it about Muslims in this time and place that makes them unable to laugh off a mere image?”
(Sacco 2015).

I believe that the anger that many Muslims felt was in fact a rational response to the discrimination and brutal military campaigns directed against them – the fact that many Muslims mobilized more forcefully around the cartoons than around images of torture coming out of Iraq ought not to detract from the significance of the protests in relation to these imperialist projects.

In 2010, *South Park* aired an episode that toyed with the idea of depicting the Prophet Mohammad. They received death threats and the network did not allow them to actually depict the Prophet. They decided to put him in a giant bear costume as their way of pushing the boundary of what was ‘allowed’.¹⁹⁶ What is interesting was not so much the predictable reaction they received (death threats and protests), but the fact that they had unknowingly done almost the exact same thing in 2001 – with no reaction. If we take the Koranic injunction against depicting images of the Prophet Mohammad as constitutive of the offense Muslims felt, this 2001 depiction was actually far more offensive, as it actually depicted his image (rather than him in a bear costume).¹⁹⁷ Instead, it seems the difference in reaction was more the result of broader geopolitical considerations – again, reaffirming my contention that religious conflict is better understood in terms of politics rather than as a conflict over incommensurable abstract principles. The first episode aired *before* September 11th, 2001, which reconfigured the way in

¹⁹⁶ The show’s creators later issued a statement that it was Comedy Central that forced them to censor the episode.

¹⁹⁷ One commenter noted: “What’s funny, of course, is that when *South Park* first featured a cartoon depiction of Mohammed back in its fifth season, not a whisper of scandal ensued. Perhaps this is because *South Park*’s depiction of Mohammed wasn’t negative: The theme of the episode—different religions have different things to recommend them, unless the religion is Scientology—was hardly provocative. Or perhaps it’s simply because the episode aired way back in July of 2001, in a very different world. In the wake of the “200” controversy, Comedy Central has tried to scrub the old episode ‘Super Best Friends,’ from the Internet, but you can find a streaming version easily enough” (Weiner 2010). Jonah Weiner goes into no detail as to what he means by ‘a very different world’, but we can presume he means a world before the 9/11 attacks and the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan.

which Muslims and ‘the West’ understood themselves in relation to one another. The 2001 episode also depicted the Prophet in a different light. He was shown alongside Jesus, Buddha, and the others, who were all religious figures, with various super powers. While the second episode very consciously meant to tweak the nose of Muslims and their religious obsession with rules about ‘blasphemy’ that offended the libertarian attitudes of the show’s creators, the 2001 episode was meant to be mocking of religion in general. It is not hard to understand why the difference in tone and the connection between Islam and violence that contextualized the 2010 episode drew a more explosive reaction. ‘Outlaw emotions’, by their very nature, fail to capture the same uptake as dominantly held ones. The increase in hate crimes against Muslims following the Charlie Hebdo atrocity have faded from memory even as France remains in a state of emergency (Stone 2015).

Like Mahmood, I believe that our quick tendency to cast these conflicts between religious and secular values in juridical terms (i.e. ‘ought the law to prohibit cartoonists from depicting the Prophet?’) misses the point of the type of injury that was done. The law certainly has a position on these issues and we might draw the line in one place or another, but ignoring the broader considerations of the relationship between these communities (Islam and Denmark) only reduces questions of ‘ought I to do this?’ to the question of ‘am I allowed to do this?’ There are ways of protecting the rights of artists and free speech that also give due consideration to the deeply held beliefs of religious minorities. Moreover, when art is political, as was the case with the cartoons discussed above, the artists making it ought to attend to the political context in which they live and the ethical considerations raised by the type of message they are promoting.

5. Conclusion

One of the reasons that religions have maintained their relevance in contemporary life is that the public/private distinction Locke placed at the heart of much liberal discourse has worked to separate religions from the state. Religious institutions transcend the boundary between the public and the private. They connect transnational communities and provide local support for members. In my community in Toronto, places of worship fulfill valuable services such as: being the major sponsors of refugees; helping to settle immigrants; celebrating the national and religious holidays of immigrants; providing ongoing community support for the poor; and addressing the needs of the local community that are unmet by the state and other stakeholders. Religious institutions also (for better or worse) organize resistance against state and imperialist projects. When the state oppresses religious groups at home (by banning forms of religious practice) or abroad (through war or drone strikes) members of those groups have mobilized themselves in opposition – sometimes violently. In this sense, modern conflicts between religious believers and secularists are not significantly different from the political conflicts that secular political theorists, such as Spinoza or Hobbes, are more comfortable discussing.

I've looked at four features of religion that have made it the subject of criticism. These criticisms of institutional corruption, community division, blind adherence to tradition, and emotional enthusiasm, are not misplaced – both history and contemporary debates over the role of religion in different states demonstrate how religious groups can mobilize their political resources for ill as well as good. However, whenever we ask what sort of restrictions need to be placed on religious organizations (like the veil ban in France) or whether religious believers ought to be exempted from otherwise applicable laws (like the exception for Sikhs to bring a kirpan into the classroom) – we need to be wary of the kind of unity we are promoting, and what

sort of power we are granting the dominant national community. Through a better understanding of some of these features of religion, I hope that progressives are able to gain a better understanding of how to productively engage religion. Repudiation only serves to harden hearts against progressive stances.

VI. Conclusion

This dissertation has examined the nature of religion, the nature of secularism, and how those two concepts relate to contemporary conflicts over the proper boundaries between religion and politics. My main argument has been that understanding contemporary religious conflicts is best approached through the lens of politics, rather than a lens that focuses primarily on religious metaphysics. One reason for this is that religion occupies such diverse roles in peoples' lives, that scholars who examine religion tend to see what is most pertinent to their own fields in it. Since my area of study is political philosophy, I've focused on the political features of these concepts – the rise of the sovereign state and how that changed the way we think about religion in the public sphere. Crossing from the metaphysical claims that different religions make to political acts carried out by religious believers can mislead the student of religion over the causes of particular conflicts. Further, critiques of religion that ignore how sovereign states and ideological beliefs have compared to religious institutions at providing communal resources and preventing violence begs the question – without religion what would we have instead? I've argued that religions have maintained their importance, alongside the growing social systems of science, the state, and secular ideologies, precisely because of their ability to offer political goods that other social systems do not.

My aim has been to show that religion and the sovereign state function as cultural technologies that each enable both the best and worst political practices that humanity has to offer. Neither religion nor the sovereign state system are likely to disappear anytime soon and the best strategy for engaging with them is to look at their resources – both material and imaginative – to try and build the best societies possible. Both religion and secular communities require

adherents to function and they both require criticism when they begin to go astray. This dissertation has immediate practical applications for facing strife between communities in the world today. I want to conclude by grouping my advice on how secular progressives can engage with religious believers under three headings – community, translation, and balance.

1. Community

Understanding contemporary religious conflicts by looking at them as conflicts between communities makes it much easier to reconcile the differences between each side. If we approach the conflicts as a ‘clash of civilizations’ in terms of a set of fundamental and irreconcilable beliefs on each side – it is difficult to see how compromise can be reached; however, if we see it as the outcome of longstanding mistrust and hostility between different communities, it is easier to see how reconciliation can be achieved – whether it is by imagining different grounds for the basis of a common community, by establishing institutional mechanisms that allow different communities to live side by side without infringing on the rights of one another, or by achieving greater trust through a pluralistic celebration of the different communities that cohabit with one another. Supporters of a secular charter in Quebec, discussed in the introduction, would do well to think of the feelings of alienation such a charter might give rise to in religious (especially Muslim) communities and to relate those feelings of alienation to their own feelings toward the Anglophone majority in Canada, who have long constructed policies of national integration without regard to the cultural specificity of Quebec.

Searching for common ground between different communities is a helpful strategy in resolving conflicts. Two possibilities for finding common ground in contemporary conflicts between religious groups – both of which are pertinent to philosophers – are Greek philosophy and the common origins of the Abrahamic religions. Greek philosophy has had an enormous

impact on the philosophical development of Jewish philosophers, such as Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides), Christian philosophers, such as St. Thomas Aquinas, Islamic philosophers, such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and secular philosophers, such as Hugo Grotius. Including sources from other religious traditions that have relied on this common philosophical heritage might allow students to better appreciate the legacy of the Greeks and to trouble the ideas that Islamic and European culture are separable and that philosophy and religion are at odds. The Abrahamic religions share a sad and troubled history, but the one God that unites them has furnished them with principles of neighborly love and mutual respect as well as jealousy and demands of obedience. As the Wars of Religion show, it is often disputes between religions that bear the closest resemblance to one another that elicit the most terrible conflicts. Recalling their common history helps to highlight the ways in which our different communities have shared and cooperated, rather than reinforcing memories of the more tragic events in our exchanges.

Criticism conducted of other communities ought to be conducted with the same standards one uses to criticize one's own community. Noam Chomsky has long been one of the foremost critics of US government foreign policy. At the heart of his criticism is the notion that we must use the same standards to judge ourselves as we do those societies that we consider to be our enemies.¹⁹⁸ He has been criticized for comparing the American bombing of the al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Sudan, which produced life-saving medicine, to the “wickedness and awesome cruelty” of the attacks of September 11th, 2001, by Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris.¹⁹⁹ Chomsky argues that: “If we are even pretending to be serious, we apply the same

¹⁹⁸ In *Manufacturing Consent*, Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky criticize the mass media as following a propaganda model. This model uses “different criteria of evaluation to be employed” towards friends and enemies such that “what is villainy in enemy states will be presented as an incidental background fact in the case of oneself and friends” (Herman and Chomsky 2002, 34).

¹⁹⁹ Hitchens asks: “*Can the attacks of September 11 be compared to an earlier outrage committed by Americans? And should they be so compared?*” (Hitchens 2001). He contends that the September 11th attacks cannot be

standards to ourselves [as to official enemies]: In the case of Sudan, we count the number who died as a direct consequence of the crime, not just those killed by cruise missiles” (Chomsky 2001). This doesn’t mean that members of different communities are incapable of criticizing one another, nor does it mean that everyone who feels alienated is equally justified in doing so. White supremacists and Black Lives Matter activists may both cite feelings of alienation, but not all such feelings are equal. Any reasonable examination of the history of racial violence and the ongoing effects of white supremacy will reveal that systemic racism makes the lives of racialized people much more difficult than their white counterparts. African-Americans’ feelings of disenfranchisement and persecution are more reasonable. When conducting criticism of other communities, attending to the historical and ongoing relationship between one’s community and theirs is necessary. In the previous chapter, we saw how Muslim reactions towards cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed were conditioned by the political relationship between the ‘Islamic world’ and the ‘West’ following the attacks on September 11th, 2001, the subsequent invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, and the rise of islamophobia in many Western states. When communities come into conflict, attending to how the other community has perceived the conflict is necessary if we hope to use discourse to overcome our differences.

compared to the al-Shifa bombing because the goals of the Clinton administration were not to cause devastation, whereas the goals of al Qaeda were to cause as much destruction as possible. Central to his criticism of Chomsky is the need to examine the “intention and motive” when evaluating the effects of a terrorist attack. Sam Harris similarly criticized Chomsky for ignoring the more reasonable intentions behind the Clinton bombing (Harris and Chomsky 2015). Chomsky notes how meaningless the intentions of state actors so frequently are, as the worst political atrocities are framed by state actors as having been based on good intentions. Chomsky states: “I also reviewed the substantial evidence about the very sincere intentions of Japanese fascists while they were devastating China, Hitler in the Sudetenland and Poland, etc. There is at least as much reason to suppose that they were sincere as Clinton was when he bombed al-Shifa” (ibid.).

2. Translation

Cornel West talks about rethinking secularism in terms of becoming “more religiously musical” (West 2011, 93).²⁰⁰ A person who is trained in classical music cannot expect to write about jazz with the competence or relevance of someone trained in the tradition of jazz. There are very real limits to discourse between the two genres, but those limits are not insurmountable – it just takes work and a willingness to appreciate the beauty in what may initially sound like discordant noise. As with music, so different cultural communities need some knowledge and appreciation of one another in order to translate the beliefs and practices of one group into something that can be understood by others. This requires us to attend to the different circumstances that produce a given set of beliefs and actions for rationales that may not be apparent to our culturally conditioned sensibilities. Saba Mahmood’s anthropological work in Egypt challenged her to rethink the way she interpreted her feminist values. In her book *The Politics of Piety*, she argues that:

if the ability to effect change in the world and in oneself is historically and culturally specific..., then the meaning and sense of agency cannot be fixed in advance, but must emerge through an analysis of the particular concepts that enable specific modes of being, responsibility, and effectivity. Viewed in this way, what may appear to be a case of deplorable passivity and docility from a progressivist point of view, may actually be a form of agency – but one that can be understood only from the discourses and structures of subordination that create the conditions of its enactment (Mahmood 2005, 15).

Her work suggests both that feminist critiques of religion and its relationship with women are important and that feminists educated in the Western tradition will need to rethink the way they interpret such relationships when examining different cultural contexts.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ West notes that: “Too many secular thinkers are religiously tone-deaf and flat-footed. But it cuts the other way, too. Religious persons...must be secularly musical, because, through empathy and imagination, we must try to get inside other peoples’ view of the world, to understand why persons are convinced by this set of arguments, these kinds of reasons as to why they are agnostic or why they’re atheistic or what have you” (West 2011, 93).

²⁰¹ Sudipta Kaviraj’s example, quoted in the second chapter, of the young woman who chose to wear the hijab and her mother’s refusal to do so is a more specific example.

One of the ways in which religious persons can be invited to translate their religious values into more secular language is by questioning their interpretation of religious doctrines and the overall meaning that they derive from their religion – in light of contemporary knowledge and values. Religious believers often want their faith to be viewed by non-believers as good and reasonable. In the second chapter, I discussed the question of responsible interpretation advocated by philosophers such as Spinoza. Religious believers often feel a tension between the competing demands of their faith and the seeming reasonableness of liberal attitudes related to issues such as homosexuality or women's role in society. Noting the diversity of beliefs amongst religious practitioners of the same faith can help to place the demands of religious interpretation onto the believer themselves. The Catholic Church may still consider homosexuality a sin, but many Catholics do not.²⁰² Each Catholic must ask themselves what kind of Catholic they want to be. There are also doctrinal reasons within Catholicism itself that can be used to criticize homophobia and, despite that fact that Pope Francis has maintained that homosexuality is a sin, he has advocated apologizing for the discrimination homosexuals and transgender people have suffered at the hands of the Catholic Church (The Associated Press 2016).

As a more secularly minded person, I've often found that values that I interpret in secular terms are appreciated by religious believers more when they are framed in religious language. Doing this requires some knowledge of, as well as appreciation for, values and beliefs that are not your own. One simple example of this, was when I was teaching in Somaliland and the subject of global warming came up. One of my students maintained that it was pointless and even hubristic for humans to believe they could either predict or alter the course of climate

²⁰² A recent PEW survey found that 68% of Catholics support same-sex marriage in the United States (PEW Research Centre 2017).

change – such things were in the hands of God alone. They cited a verse from the Koran and their belief that climate change was a hoax in the West designed to undermine the oil wealth that existed in Saudi Arabia (considered a very holy place by most of my students and often cited as a leading example of what they hoped their nation could become one day). I might have confronted their religious beliefs with science or simply remained silent on the issue but given that there was a major drought going on at the time I felt that it was important that they at least think of climate change as a reasonable argument. So I made reference to verses in the Koran that praised knowledge and study. I then gave an example of a house that was on fire and in danger of spreading that fire to surrounding buildings. Finally, I concluded that only Allah knew whether that fire would be put out or whether it would spread across the city – but asked them if this meant it was hubristic to attempt to help in putting out the fire and whether it was wrong to use knowledge gained from their studies in university to help direct others in doing this more quickly. What I believe impressed the class with this example was not so much the logic of it, but that I'd attempted to translate it into religious terms, rather than simply dismissing the pertinence of religion to the issue.

Translation between secular and religious values becomes more complicated at the state level, but remains possible. The problem is that when public officials reference a given religious tradition sometimes those who are not a part of that religious community feel excluded. While this problem makes public acts of cultural-translation more difficult, it remains valuable for two reasons. First, sometimes the state has failed a religious community and redressing that failure requires public acts that address the harm done to that community. In the wake of the mass shooting at a mosque in Quebec City, Canada's House of Commons passed a motion (M-103) condemning all forms of racism and religious discrimination and mentioned islamophobia as a

particular source of such discrimination. The motion touched off months of debate and elicited a number of protests and counter-protests, with critics worried that it would hamper free speech or single out Islam for special treatment (CBC News 2017). In the wake of events such as the mosque shooting, making particular reference to the members of the wronged community seems reasonable. As with the ‘Black Lives Matter’ protesters in the United States, singling out the community that has come under assault is required to mend the rift in social relations caused by acts of violence. An unwillingness to do so (by those who maintain that ‘all lives matter’) gives such communities the impression that the broader national culture is ignoring the wrong that has been done to them and is content with the status quo. The second reason cultural translation is valuable in the public realm is as an endorsement of pluralism. Rather than attempt to avoid reference to any particular cultural tradition, endorsing the many traditions that hold value in society can help give each of them a sense that they belong. In Canada, we translate our laws into both official languages. This is done as an act of inclusion, so that citizens who grew up speaking French and English feel equally included in Canadian society (though it still notably excludes Canada’s Indigenous languages). Translating our shared values into multiple traditions helps to balance the values of the majority, which are always represented in the public culture, with the values of minority groups.

3. Balance

In the previous chapter, I noted that religious institutions are sometimes able to offer important social services that fill in the gaps left by secular institutions. While we may accept the value of religion on the basis that it is a force in the world and is unlikely to disappear anytime soon – here I want to note some of the ways in which religions are able to offer unique resources to society. This doesn’t mean that secular institutions are unable to provide these resources, but

bureaucratic institutions have a certain inertia (which Machiavelli believed would always cause them to become corrupt) – and having religious institutions with alternative visions of the world can, alongside similarly-minded secular NGOs, be helpful when societies require a change in direction. While we’ve seen that separating religious from state functions is not the natural result of an inherent essence possessed by either religion or the state, but rather a contingent historical development, the fact that, in many states, religions have become structurally separate entities from the state puts them in a unique position to criticize and act against the failings of state structures. Secular non-governmental organizations are able to fulfill many of the same functions, but sometimes lack the human and institutional resources provided by religions.

Religions are often able to balance the national-culture of a state with sub-national communities that may not be as well-represented. The PEW Research Centre distinguishes ‘historically black churches’ from other Protestant sects because they serve distinct social roles and form distinct communities from other religious affiliations. They find that: “African-Americans are markedly more religious on a variety of measures than the U.S. population as a whole, including level of affiliation with a religion, attendance at religious services, frequency of prayer and religion’s importance in life” (Sahgal and Smith 2009). Churches, mosques, temples, and other places of worship allow local members of communities to gather and talk about issues of local import, as well as issues that connect them to their broader communities.

Religions are also able to balance the impersonal, bureaucratic barriers that exist between citizens and state-resources by offering more personalized services than secular states. One of the ways that religions have maintained their popularity in spite of the growth of secular state institutions is by providing community resources that might otherwise be unavailable. In rural areas, religious institutions maintain themselves by filling gaps left by centralized states, which

are more interested in providing services to dense population centers and therefore capturing votes and support from a greater proportion of the population. In urban areas, religious institutions help to maintain a local sense of community – especially in immigrant societies with diverse populations. Immigrant societies, such as the United States and Canada, are in particularly strong positions to benefit from religious pluralism. In such contexts, religions are capable of providing bridging mechanisms between their members and the broader national community as well as community resources for matters of common interest.

Religions are able to balance the sovereign monopoly on state violence with calls for non-violent resistance. The political theories that have given rise to the notion of sovereignty rely on a justified sense of anxiety and insecurity that human beings feel. The regulation of violence with armies, police forces, and the rule of law are important – even necessary – developments in our attempts to constrain the violent impulses to which humanity is prone. However, focusing on the role of force in politics can sometimes serve to exacerbate, rather than mitigate, the potential for violence. Separation from state institutions allows religious communities to look past the regulation of violence as a means of pursuing peace. This does not mean that religions are inherently peaceful, or even that the fact that a leader is religious means s/he will use means any less violent than the most genocidal of secular tyrants. However, their separation from sovereign power gives them the ability to talk about the need for peace without reference to the force behind sovereign backed forms of law. In the previous chapter, we saw how black churches in the United States became important sites of mourning in the wake of police violence that is so frequently directed against young black men. They can accomplish this without forming militias or threatening police officers. Church ministers and community members avail themselves of the democratic process and push for change *through* secular institutions, but they are not *of* secular

institutions. Religious leaders often act as important non-state actors, whose religious authority grants them the ability to approach conflicts in ways that state actors cannot, or will not.

Reference to the divine can also allow religious leaders to call for forgiveness in the aftermath of oppression, as Desmond Tutu famously did following the end of apartheid in South Africa. They can negotiate between states, as the Pope recently did in helping to thaw relations between the United States and Cuba. They can act as representatives of a downtrodden minority to the state, like Martin Luther King Jr., or as leaders of burgeoning nationalist movements, as Gandhi did during the drive for Indian independence. When states refuse to listen to the demands of such leaders, religious groups sometimes turn militant – like the nation of Islam. State actors would therefore do well to listen to the demands of such groups, lest they turn violent.

The religious concern with the divine also balances the concerns of states by placing value on non-worldly goods. Marxism's opposition to capitalism was primarily over the exploitation that was caused by the expropriation of surplus value from workers. In this way, communism and liberal-capitalism have both formed societies that, for all their differences, see politics primarily in terms of the distribution of economic goods. In contrast, religions and other spiritual belief systems that emphasize sacred goods offer valuable ways of shifting social policies away from worldly goods. Since worldly goods are by nature finite, directing our political focus away from such goods can sometimes allay conflicts by increasing the value of goods that are not finite.

Religious approaches to nature that see it as valuable in its own right can help secular societies that have long seen the earth primarily in terms of resources that exist to be exploited. One example of this is the emphasis that many traditional Indigenous societies place on the people's connection to the land. The smudging ceremony mentioned in the previous chapter

(which one family felt infringed on their religious liberty) is one example of a symbolic act that draws on notions of the sacred to de-emphasize the drive for economic goods. Indigenous protests against pipelines across their sacred land similarly emphasize the connection between the people and the land – often to the consternation of pipeline enthusiasts and government officials who see the protests as hampering economic development and job creation. Thousands of protesters recently converged on the Standing Rock Sioux reserve in the United States to protest the building of the Dakota Access pipeline – many of whom were motivated by a Lakota Prophecy that holds that a ‘black snake’ (the pipeline) “would slither across the land, desecrating the sacred sites and poisoning the water before destroying the Earth” (Pauls 2016). The project is worth \$3.7 billion US and would transport 470,000 barrels of crude oil a day, crossing twice under the Missouri river – which supplies millions of people with fresh water. Lisa Grayshield, member of the Washoe Tribe and associate professor of educational psychology at New Mexico State University commented on the protest: “This was opened up as a prayer to stop that black snake from coming in, to pray for the water” (ibid.). In Canada, Indigenous traditions and outlooks are (slowly) gaining symbolic acceptance. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recently cited the Indigenous idea of thinking of how actions will impact the next seven generations in a speech to the UN (Trudeau 2017). Seeing such ideas incorporated into policy would mark both a spiritual and secular improvement in our relationship with the land.

Another example of religions taking a different view of nature than secularists, is found in the beliefs of many Buddhists and Hindus towards animals. Secular states, which see animals primarily in terms of their value to human society, see animals as needing few (if any) legal protections. Industrial agriculture has increased animal suffering to never-before seen levels. While non-religious arguments against causing animal suffering (such as those popularized by

Peter Singer) do exist – religious communities have long been the largest groups that abstain from eating meat (or certain types of meat). Beyond the arguments that stem from animal cruelty, industrial-scale animal consumption (especially beef) takes a toll on the environment – generating a large percentage of the world’s CO2 production. A recent study found that reducing heavy red meat consumption might lead to a reduction of between 15 and 35 percent by 2050 (Magill 2016).

Attempts to separate the sphere of religion from the sphere of the political can never succeed as each of them constantly overflow into the other. Religious believers have adapted to the political and existential conditions that characterize our secular age and secular thinkers have long drawn inspiration from religious traditions, whether to develop new political theories or as part of a broader search for meaning. Drawing on multiple traditions can only give us more imaginative resources to weather the trials of human conflict.

References

- Alfred, Taiaiake, and Jeff Corntassel. 2005. "Being Indigenous: Resurgences Against Contemporary Colonialism." *Government and Opposition* 40 (4): 597-614.
- Anderson, Benedict. 2006. *Imagined Communities*. New York: Verso.
- Anghie, Antony. 2005. *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Aquinas, Saint Thomas. 1947. *Summa Theologica*. Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Translated by Father's of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benzinger Bros. Accessed May 15, 2014. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa>.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1968. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt.
- Asad, Talal. 2003. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- . 1993. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: John's Hopkins University Press.
- Augustine, St. 1890. "City of God." In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, by St. Augustin, edited by Philip Schaff, translated by Marcus Dods. New York: The Christian Literature Publishing Co. Accessed September 15, 2014. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.html>.
- Badiou, Alain. 2003. *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bakx, Kyle. 2016. "Canada's Poor Urged to Earn More by Filing their Taxes." *CBC News*. October 12. Accessed October 13, 2016. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/filing-taxes-poverty-benefit-1.3792408>.
- BBC. 2010. *BBC News*. September 4. Accessed September 25, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-11182225>.
- Beard, Charles A. 1965. *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*. New York: The Free Press.
- Beeby, Dean. 2010. "Massive Failure Rates follow New, Tougher Citizenship Tests." *The Star*. November 29. Accessed August 5, 2016. https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2010/11/29/massive_failure_rates_follow_new_to_ugher_canadian_citizenship_tests.html.
- Bellah, Robert N. 2011. *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age*. Cambridge : Bellknap Press.
- . 1991. "RobertBellah.com." *Civil Religion in America*. Accessed May 29th, 2015. http://www.robertbellah.com/articles_5.htm.
- Bergdoll, Barry, and Leah Dickerman, . 2009. *Bauhaus 1919-1933: Workshops for Modernity*. 2nd. New York: Museum of Modern Art.
- Blair, Tony. 2010. *A Journey: My Political Life*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Bloch, Marc. 1964. *Feudal Society*. Vol. I. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Briquelet, Kate. 2014. "New high school course: 'How to deal with cops'." *New York Post*. November 23. Accessed June 30, 2017. <http://nypost.com/2014/11/23/new-hs-class-teaches-kids-how-to-deal-with-cops/>.
- Buchan, Bruce. 2012. "Chapter Title: Changing Contours of Corruption in Western Political Thought, c.1200–1700." In *Corruption: Expanding the Focus*, edited by Manuhia Barcham, Barry Hindess and Peter Larmour, 73-95. Canberra: ANU Press.

- Byman, Daniel L. 2011. "Egypt 2012: What if the Muslim Brotherhood Comes to Power." *Brookings Institution*. February 4. Accessed October 15, 2016. <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/egypt-2012-what-if-the-muslim-brotherhood-comes-to-power/>.
- Casanova, José. 1994. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 2016. "The Secular and Secularisms." *Social Research* 76 (4): 1049-1066.
- Cavanagh, William T. 2009. *The Myth of Religious Violence*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- CBC News. 2017. "House of Commons passes anti-Islamophobia motion." *CBC News*. March 23. Accessed October 15, 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/m-103-islamophobia-motion-vote-1.4038016>.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2005. "Language and Freedom." In *Chomsky on Anarchism*, by Noam Chomsky, 101-117. Oakland: AK Press.
- . 2001. "Reply to Hitchens." *The Nation*. October 1. Accessed October 14, 2017. <https://www.thenation.com/article/reply-hitchens/>.
- Cohen, G.A. 2000. *If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're So Rich?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Collier, Lorna. 2014. "Incarceration Nation." *American Psychological Association*. Accessed August 5, 2016. <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2014/10/incarceration.aspx>.
- Connor, Phillip, and Matthias Koenig. 2014. "Religion and the Socio-economic Integration of Immigrants Across Canada." In *Religion in the Public Sphere: Canadian Case Studies*, edited by Solange Lefebvre and Lori G. Beaman, 293-312. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Copleston, F.C. 1977. *A History of Medieval Philosophy*. London: Methune and Co Ltd.
- Creppell, Ingrid. 2010. "Secularization: Religion and the Roots of Innovation in the Political Sphere." In *Religion and the Political Imagination*, edited by Ira Katznelson and Gareth Stedman Jones, 23-45. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Criss, Doug. 2017. "Man wears strainer on his head in driver's license photo." *CNN*. June 2. Accessed September 28, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/06/01/us/pasta-strainer-license-photo-trnd/index.html>.
- Dawkins, Richard. 2006. *The God Delusion*. New York: Bantom Press.
- Dennett, Daniel C. 2006. *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*. New York: Penguin Books.
- . 1991. "Real Patterns." *The Journal of Philosophy* 88 (1): 27-51.
- Devlin, Patrick. 2008. "Morals and the Criminal Law." In *Readings in the Philosophy of Law*, edited by Keith C. Culver, 283-298. Peterborough: Broadview Press.
- Dickinson, Anna. 2003. "Domestic and Foreign Policy Considerations and the Origins of Post-war Soviet Church-State Relations, 1941-6." In *Religion and the Cold War*, edited by Diane Kirby, 23-36. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Drainville, Bernard. 2013. "Bill 60: Charter Affirming the Values of State Secularism and Religious Neutrality and of Equality between Women and Men, and Providing a Framework for Accommodation Requests." Accessed April 22, 2014. <http://www.nosvaleurs.gouv.qc.ca/medias/pdf/Charter.pdf>.

- Durkheim, Émile. 2001. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translated by Carol Cosman. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dworkin, Gerald. 1999. "Devlin was Right: Law and the Enforcement of Morality." *William and Mary Law Review* 40 (3): 927-946.
- Dworkin, Ronald. 2013. *Religion Without God*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Elliott, Josh. 2014. "B.C. 'Pastafarian' loses driver's licence over holy colander hat." *CTV News*. October 6. Accessed September 28, 2017. <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/b-c-pastafarian-loses-driver-s-licence-over-holy-colander-hat-1.2041844>.
- Engels, Frederick. 2010(1878). *Anti Duhring: Herr Eugen Duhring's Revolution in Science*. Edited by Mark Harris. Translated by Emily Burns. Leipzig: Progress Publishers. Accessed April 22, 2017. https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/anti_duhring.pdf.
- Fitzgerald, Timothy. 1997. "A critique of "religion" as a cross-cultural category." *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 91-110.
- Gerring, John. 1997. "Ideology: A Definitional Analysis." *Political Research Quarterly* 50 (4): 957-994.
- Glover, Willis B. 1960. "God and Thomas Hobbes." *Church History* 29 (3): 275-297.
- Gould, Stephen Jay. 2011. *The Hedgehog, the Fox, and the Magister's Pox: Mending the Gap between the Sciences and the Humanities*. Cambridge: Belknap.
- Grotius, Hugo. 2012. *On the Law of War and Peace*. Edited by Stephen C. Neff. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Harris, Sam. 2005. "An Atheist Manifesto." *Truthdig.org*. December 7. Accessed May 22, 2015. http://www.truthdig.com/dig/item/200512_an_atheist_manifesto.
- . 2005. *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Freedom*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Harris, Sam, and Noam Chomsky. 2015. "The Limits of Discourse: As Demonstrated by Sam Harris and Noam Chomsky." *The Blog: Sam Harris*. May 3. Accessed October 14, 2017. <https://www.samharris.org/blog/item/the-limits-of-discourse>.
- Hart, H.L.A. 2008. "Law, Liberty, and Morality." In *Readings in the Philosophy of Law*, edited by Keith C. Culver, 298-306. Peterborough: Broadview Press.
- Herman, Edward S, and Noam Chomsky. 2002. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Heyd, Michael. 1995. *Be Sober and Reasonable: The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries*. Leiden: Brill.
- Hitchens, Christopher. 2001. "A Rejoinder to Noam Chomsky." *The Nation*. October 4. Accessed October 14, 2017. <https://www.thenation.com/article/rejoinder-noam-chomsky/>.
- . 2009. *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. New York: Hachett Book Group.
- Hobbes, Thomas. 1985. *Leviathan*. New York: Penguin.
- Hunt, Elle, and Michael Safi. 2015. "Richard Dawkins links Isis child who beheaded man and 'clock boy' Ahmed Mohamed." *The Guardian*. November 25. Accessed October 10, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/nov/25/richard-dawkins-links-isis-child-who-beheaded-man-and-clock-boy-ahmed-mohamed>.
- Huntington, Samuel P. 1993. "The Clash of Civilizations." *Foreign Affairs* 72 (2): 22-49.
- Hurd, Elizabeth S. 2008. *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Inquiry, BBC News: The. 2015. "BBC News." *Will the Dalai Lama Reincarnate?* March 25. Accessed May 1, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-32032790>.
- Jaggar, Alison M. 1989. "Love and Knowledge: Emotions in Feminist Epistemology." *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal in Philosophy* 32 (2): 151-176.
- James, William. 2004. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Jones, Nelson. 2013. "Is Scientology a real religion? The UK Supreme Court says so." *New Statesman*. December 11. Accessed September 28, 2017. <https://www.newstatesman.com/nelson-jones/2013/12/scientology-real-religion-uk-supreme-court-says-so>.
- Juergensmeyer, Mark. 1982. *Religion as Social Vision: The Movement against Untouchability in 20th-Century Punjab*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 2011. "Rethinking the Secular and Religious Aspects of Violence." In *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan van Antwerpen, 185-203. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1993. *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*. California: University of California.
- Kahan, Dan M. 2013. "Ideology, motivated reasoning, and cognitive reflection." *Judgement and Decision Making* 8 (4): 407-424.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1997. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Translated by Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaviraj, Sudipta. 2010. "On Thick and Thin Religion: Some Critical Reflections of Secularization Theory." In *Religion and the Political Imagination*, edited by Ira Katznelson and Gareth Stedman Jones, 336-355. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Keene, Edward. 2002. *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism, and Order in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Khalidi, Muhammad Ali. 2013. "Natural Kinds versus Human Kinds." In *Encyclopedia of Philosophy and the Social Sciences*, by Byron Kaldis, 515-518. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- King Jr, Martin Luther. 1963. "Letter From a Birmingham Jail." *The Atlantic Monthly*, August: 78-88.
- Kojève, Alexander. 2000. "Tyranny and Wisdom." In *On Tyranny*, by Leo Strauss, edited by Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth, 135-176. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lee-Shanok, Philip. 2017. "GTA book publisher accused of whitewashing Indigenous history." *CBC News*. October 3. Accessed October 4, 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/childrens-textbook-includes-inaccurate-account-of-indigenous-history-1.4315945>.
- Levitz, Stephanie. 2016. "Syrian refugees screened by Conservative government's 'areas of focus'." *CBC News*. January 28. Accessed September 28, 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/syrian-refugees-conservatives-focus-religion-ethnicity-1.3423323>.
- Lifeline-Syria. 2015. "Some Frequently Asked Questions from Public Meetings." *Lifeline Syria*. Accessed August 5, 2016. <http://lifelinesyria.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Lifeline-Syria-FAQ-draft-444-pdf.pdf>.
- Locke, John. 1689. *A Letter Concerning Toleration*. Translated by William Popple. Accessed May 1, 2014. <http://socserv2.socsci.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/locke/toleration.pdf>.

- . 1996. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Edited by Kenneth P. Winkler. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- . 1690. *Second Treatise of Government*. Vol. Digital Edition. Project Gutenberg. Accessed January 6, 2014.
- Lugo, Louis. 2008. *Religious Beliefs and Practices: Diverse and Politically Relevant*. US Religious Landscape Survey, Washington D.C.: Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life.
- Lugones, Maria. 1995. "Hard-to-Handle Anger." In *Overcoming Racism and Sexism*, 203-217. Rowman and Littlefield.
- Luther, Martin. 1917. "Disputation of Doctor Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences." *Project Wittenberg*. Accessed July 26, 2016. <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/web/ninetyfive.html>.
- Machiavelli, Niccolo. 1976. *The Discourses*. Edited by Bernard Crick. Translated by Leslie J. Walker. Suffolk: Pelican.
- . 1981. *The Prince*. Translated by George Bull. New York: Penguin Books.
- Magill, Bobby. 2016. "Studies Show Link Between Red Meat and Climate Change." *Climate Central*. April 20. Accessed October 15, 2017. <http://www.climatecentral.org/news/studies-link-red-meat-and-climate-change-20264>.
- Mahmood, Saba. 2016. *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . 2009. "Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?" In *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech*, by Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler and Saba Mahmood, 64-100. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Martinich, A.P. 1992. *The Two Gods of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on Religion and Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Marx, Karl. 1978. "After the Revolution: Marx Debates Bakunin." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, translated by Robert C. Tucker, 542-548. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- . 2012(1843). *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Aristeus Books.
- . 1844. *On the Jewish Question*. Kindle: Aristeus Books.
- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. 1978(1888). "Manifesto of the Communist Party." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker, 469-500. New York: Norton and Company.
- Maschi, David. 2009. *Overview: The Conflict Between Religion and Evolution*. Pew Research Centre. Accessed May 31, 2016. <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/02/04/overview-the-conflict-between-religion-and-evolution/>.
- McGraw, Brian T. 2010. *Faith in Politics: Religion and Liberal Democracy*. Kindle Edition. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- MEMRI. 2010. "Taliban Statement Denounces Tony Blair for Calling 'Radical Islam' the Greatest Threat; Says: 'The Enemies of Islam Have Succeeded in Their Plans to Such an Extent That Today, Our Enemies Can Call Any Muslims... Radicals'." *The Middle East Media Research Institute*. September 16. Accessed September 25, 2017. https://www.memri.org/reports/taliban-statement-denounces-tony-blair-calling-radical-islam-greatest-threat-says-enemies#_ednref1.
- Mill, John Stuart. 1970. *The Six Great Humanistic Essays of John Stuart Mill*. New York: Washington Square Press.
- Mills, Charles. 1997. *The Racial Contract*. New York: Cornell University Press.

- Modood, Tariq. 2004. "Muslims and the Politics of Difference." *The Political Quarterly* 100-115.
- Moore, Sharon E, Michael A Robinson, A. Christson Adedoyin, Michael Brooks, Dana K Harmon, and Daniel Boamah. 2016. "Hands up - Don't shoot: Police Shooting of Young Black Males: Implications for Social Work and Human Services." *Journal of Human Behaviour in the Social Environment* 26 (3-4): 254-266.
- Newell, Waller R. 2005. "Is there an Ontology to Tyranny?" In *Confronting Tyranny: Ancient Lessons for Global Politics*, edited by Toivo Koivukoski and David Edward Tabachnick, 141-159. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Norris, Pippa, and Ronald Inglehart. 2004. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nussbaum, Martha. 2012. *The New Religious Intolerance: Overcoming the Politics of Fear in an Anxious Age*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Pascal, Blaise. 2016. *Pensées*. eBook: Open Road.
- Pascal, Roy. 1938. "Martin Luther and his Times." *Science and Society* 2 (3): 332-347.
- Pauls, Karen. 2016. "'We must kill the black snake': Prophecy and prayer motivate Standing Rock." *CBC News*. December 11. Accessed December 11, 2016.
- PEW Research Centre. 2017. "Changing Attitudes on Gay Marriage." *PEW Research Centre*. June 26. Accessed October 16, 2017. <http://www.pewforum.org/fact-sheet/changing-attitudes-on-gay-marriage/>.
- Plato. 1997. "Phaedo." In *Plato: Complete Works*, by Plato, edited by John M. Cooper, translated by G.M.A. Grube, 51-100. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.
- . "Republic." In *Plato: Complete Works*, by Plato, 971-1223. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Ramji, Rubina. 2014. "Maintaining and Nurturing an Islamic Identity in Canada - Online and Offline." In *Religion in the Public Sphere: Canadian Cases*, edited by Solange Lefebvre and Lori G. Beaman, 97-120. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Rawls, John. 1999(1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge: Belknap Press.
- . 2005. *Political Liberalism*. Expanded. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Riley-Smith, Jonathan. 2008. *The Crusades, Christianity, and Islam*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1999. *The Social Contract*. Translated by Christopher Betts. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rukavina, Steve. 2015. "Quebec judge wouldn't hear case of woman wearing hijab." *CBC News*. February 26. Accessed June 29, 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-judge-wouldn-t-hear-case-of-woman-wearing-hijab-1.2974282>.
- Sacco, Joe. 2015. *On Satire - A Response to the Charlie Hebdo Attacks*. January 9. Accessed October 7, 2016.
- Sahgal, Neha, and Greg Smith. 2009. "A Religious Portrait of African-Americans." *Pew Research Centre*. January 30. Accessed October 15, 2017. <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/01/30/a-religious-portrait-of-african-americans/#>.
- Said, Edward. 1994. *Orientalism*. New York: Random House.
- . 2001. "The Clash of Ignorance." *The Nation*. October 22. Accessed June 29, 2017. <https://www.thenation.com/article/clash-ignorance/>.
- Schilbrack, Kevin. 2012. "The Social Construction of "Religion" and Its Limits: A Critical Reading of Timothy Fitzgerald." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 24: 97-117.

- Spinoza, Benedict De. 2007. *Theological-Political Treatise*. Edited by Jonathan Israel. Translated by Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stepan, Alfred. 2011. "The Multiple Secularisms of Democratic and Non-democratic Regimes." In *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan van Antwerpen, 114-144. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Stone, Jon. 2015. "Firebombs and pigs heads thrown into mosques as anti-Muslim attacks increase after Paris shootings." *The Independent*. January 14. Accessed October 15, 2016. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/firebombs-and-pigs-heads-thrown-into-mosques-as-anti-muslim-attacks-increase-after-paris-shootings-9977423.html>.
- Strauss, Leo. 1978. *Thoughts on Machiavelli*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sullivan, Vickie B. 1996. *Machiavelli's Three Romes: Religion, Humanity, and Politics Reformed*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press.
- Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- . 2010. "Afterword: Apologia Pro Libro Suo." In *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, edited by Michael Warner, VanAntwerpen Jonathan and Craig Calhoun, 300-321. Cambridge: Harvard.
- . 2014. "How to Define Secularism." In *Boundaries of Toleration*, edited by Alfred Stepan and Charles Taylor, 59-78. New York: Columbia University.
- . 1998. "Modes of Secularism." In *Secularism and its Critics*, edited by Rajeev Bhargava, 31-53. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- The Associated Press. 2006. "Danish court dismisses Muhammad cartoon lawsuit." *CBC News*. October 26. Accessed October 16, 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/entertainment/danish-court-dismisses-muhammad-cartoon-lawsuit-1.596079>.
- . 2016. "Gays and others marginalized deserve an apology, Pope says." *CBC News*. June 26. Accessed October 16, 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/pope-gay-community-deserves-apology-1.3653653>.
- Theodorou, Angelina E. 2014. *64 Countries have Religious Symbols on their National Flags*. November 25. Accessed June 25, 2017. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/11/25/64-countries-have-religious-symbols-on-their-national-flags/>.
- Troian, Martha. 2016. *CBC News*. December 30. Accessed June 25, 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/indigenous-smudging-debate-canadian-schools-1.3916525>.
- Trudeau, Justin. 2017. "Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Address to the 72th Session of the United Nations General Assembly." *Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada*. September 21. Accessed October 15, 2017. <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2017/09/21/prime-minister-justin-trudeaus-address-72th-session-united-nations-general-assembly>.
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Accessed October 10, 2017. http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf.
- Tuck, Richard. 2011. "The 'Christian Atheism' of Thomas Hobbes." In *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, edited by Michael Cyril William Hunter and David Wootton. Oxford: Clarendon. <http://books1.scholarsportal.info.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/viewdoc.html?id=/ebooks/ebooks2/oso/2012-10-01/2/9780198227366>.

- Tutu, Desmond. 2014. "'Forgiveness is Liberating': Desmond Tutu on Healing a Nation's Racist Past." *Yes! Magazine: Powerful Ideas, Practical Actions*, December. Accessed August 7th, 2016. <http://www.yesmagazine.org/peace-justice/forgiveness-is-liberating-desmond-tutu-on-healing-a-nations-racist-past>.
- Viroli, Maurizio. 2010. *Machiavelli's God*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Vitoria, Francisco de. 1991. *Political Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2011. *The Modern World System I*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Watch, Human Rights. 2016. *Relentless: Detention and Prosecution of Tibetans under China's 'Stability Maintenance' Campaign*. Human Rights Watch. Accessed June 21, 2017. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/tibet0516web_0.pdf.
- Weber, Max. 1958. *From Max Weber*. Edited by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weiner, Jonah. 2010. *Bleeps be upon Him: The Genius of South Park's Censored 'Mohammed' Episodes*. April 29. Accessed October 7, 2016. www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2010/04/bleeps_be_upon_him.html.
- West, Cornel. 2011. "Prophetic Religion and the Future of Capitalist Civilization." In *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, 92-100. New York: Columbia University Press.
- X, Malcolm, and A.B. Spellman. 2005. "Interview with Malcolm X." *Monthly Review: An Independent Socialist Magazine*, February. Accessed August 5, 2016. <http://monthlyreview.org/2005/02/01/interview-with-malcolm-x/>.
- Zinn, Howard. 2003. *A People's History of the United States*. New York: Perennial Classics.