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Has the Study of Global Politics Found Religion?

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Abstract

The past generation has witnessed a resurgence of religion in global politics, but political science has been slow to catch up with it. The reason lies in the secularism embedded in the field's major theories, one that reflects actual secularism in world politics, beginning with the events surrounding the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and growing steadily through the middle twentieth century. Today, a small but growing number of political scientists have begun to explore religion, doing so in ways that depart from secular assumptions and embrace religion's distinctiveness to greater and lesser degrees.

INTRODUCTION

God is winning. God is dead. God is not great. The revenge of God. Crossing the gods. The Stillborn God. Terror in the mind of God. Terror in the name of God. The mighty and the almighty. Strong religion. Getting religion. Irreligion: the end of faith. The coming religious peace. The clash of civilizations. The global resurgence of religion and the transformation of international relations. Religion: the missing dimension of statecraft. Religion in international relations: the return from exile. Sacred causes. The ambivalence of the sacred. A secular age. Why I am not a secularist. The desecularization of the world. Letter to a Christian nation. All are titles of books written in the past decade or so on the influence of religion in public life. Some claim it is waxing, others waning; some see it as sanguine, others as sanguinary. What is undeniable—and perhaps evidence for the waxing thesis—is that talk about religion has risen. Doubtless, Osama bin Laden has occasioned it, as has religion's pervasive role in American politics. But even in Western Europe, supposedly secularism's ground zero, heads of state Tony Blair, Nicolas Sarkozy, Silvio Berlusconi, and Angela Merkel have all made strong—and mostly positive—statements about religion's growing global influence in recent years. Even German intellectual Jürgen Habermas, who built his reputation as one of Europe's leading moral and political philosophers around secular Enlightenment thought, came in 2004 to recognize Christianity as the cultural source of tolerance, human rights, and democracy in Europe. "Everything else is postmodern chatter," he quipped. On virtually every continent, among populations of every world religion, as I argue in this review, the place of religion in public life has become more prominent and more controversial in the past generation.

Has political science kept up with the trend? I examine this question with respect to the fields of international relations and comparative politics. Not so long ago, a coterie of scholars decried the international relations field's lack of attention to religion and politics (Fox 2001,

Johnston & Sampson 1994, Petito & Hatzopoulos 2003, Philpott 2001). Emblematic was Fox's (2001) title, "Religion: An Oft Overlooked Element of International Studies." One afternoon in 1999, while finishing research for a book that emphasized religion's role in the founding of international relations (Philpott 2001), I performed a highly unscientific study in the library in which I counted the number of articles published on religion between 1980 and 1999 in four leading journals of global politics—*International Studies Quarterly, International Security, World Politics*, and *International Organization*. The result: roughly six, depending on how one counts them. More recently and far more carefully, Wald & Wilcox (2006) demonstrated religion's marginal role in the *American Political Science Review*, the flagship journal of the entire discipline. *Mirabile dictu*, in the years since these clarion calls were sounded, political scientists have produced a spate of important books and articles on religion and global politics. Yet it remains the case that religion's place in political science scholarship is vastly underproportioned to its place in headlines around the globe, and to scholarship in political economy, security studies, international institutions, and the like. What lies behind this dearth? Its source, I argue here, is the intellectual assumptions that guide the study of international relations and comparative politics. The recent surge of works on religion transcends these assumptions to greater and lesser degrees.

WHY POLITICAL SCIENCE HAD NOT FOUND RELIGION

Although the clarion calls revealed a genuine neglect, religion's absence was never complete. Even at the time these calls were sounded, several important scholarly works on religion and global politics had been written, some by political scientists, others not by political scientists but still broadly social scientific in their method. An overlooked goldmine of insight on religion and comparative politics is the work of political scientist Donald Eugene Smith (e.g., 1974) in

the 1960s and 1970s. Still worth reading, too, is Bozeman's (1960) *Politics and Culture in International History*. In the 1980s and 1990s, several social scientists came to recognize religion's role in nationalism, both historic and contemporary (Colley 1992, Hastings 1997, Juergensmeyer 1993, Little 1991, Marx 2003, Smith 2003a). Once the resurgence of Islam had become evident in the late 1980s and 1990s, scholars studied its political impact (Arjomand 1995, Esposito & Voll 1996, Lawrence 1998, Piscatori 1986, Roy 1994). Writing in a sociological vein, Marty & Appleby (1991; 1993a,b; 1994; 1995) produced major comparative work on global fundamentalism in the early 1990s. Sociologist Jose Casanova's (1994) *Public Religions in the Modern World*, a landmark attack on secularization theory, could easily count as comparative political science.

It was a political scientist, Samuel P. Huntington (1993, 1996), who sparked a worldwide debate over religion and politics through his thesis that global conflict after the Cold War would take the form of a "clash" of religiously defined "civilizations." Other political scientists, too, were writing important works involving religion. Kalyvas (1996) and Warner (2000) advanced scholarship on political parties through their works on the understudied, though highly electorally successful, phenomenon of Christian Democracy. Still others had studied the politics of the Catholic Church, ethnoreligious violence, and other topics (Byrnes 2001, Fleet & Smith 1997, Fox 2002, Gill 1998, Haynes 1998). Several normative works on international relations from a religious perspective ought to be noted, too (Mapel & Nardin 1998, Nardin 1996, Nardin & Mapel 1993). Again, since the clarion calls went out, quality scholarly works on religion and politics have appeared more frequently. But all told, works on religion still form only a small niche of scholarship in comparative politics and international relations.

Why this paucity? It is due to a pervasive secularism in assumptions and methods. But what does it mean for a field to be secular? The term is notoriously shifty, sometimes used descriptively, sometimes predictively, sometimes prescriptively, sometimes ideologically, sometimes implying hostility to religion, sometimes carrying a neutral or positive connotation. At least nine concepts can be distinguished (see **Table 1**), of which four are neutral or positive and five are negative. Proceeding first with the positive or neutral concepts, the earliest

Table 1 Nine concepts of the secular

Positive or neutral	Negative
1. *Secular* means pertaining to the world outside the monastic sphere	5. *Secularization* is a decline in the number of individuals who hold religious beliefs
2. *Secular* means a concept or use of language that makes no specific reference to religion or revelation but is not necessarily hostile to them	6. *Secularization* is a decline in religious practice and community
3. *Secular* means a differentiation between religion and other spheres of society (political, economic, cultural, etc.) but not necessarily the decline of religion's influence	7. *Secularization* is a differentiation between religion and other spheres of society (political, economic, cultural, etc.) in a way that entails, and is part and parcel of, a long-term decline in the influence of religion
4. *Secular* describes a social context in which religious faith is one of many options rather than an unproblematic feature of the universe (Taylor 2007)	8. *Secularization* involves a decline of religious influence on politics, not because of a general long-term decline in religion but rather because of the intentional efforts of regimes to suppress it. This concept does not imply a decline in religious belief or practice
	9. *Secularism* is an ideology or set of beliefs that advocates the marginalization of religion from other spheres of life

meaning of the term secular comes from medieval Europe, where it referred to the world outside of the monastic sphere. Second, secular can simply mean a concept or use of language that makes no specific reference to religion or revelation but is not necessarily hostile to them. The injunction "do not steal" is expressed in secular language, but as one of the Ten Commandments, it is obviously not inimical to religion.

Third, secular can mean the differentiation of religion from other spheres of society, but not necessarily the decline of religion's public influence. Differentiation, at least in the political sense, can be defined as the degree of mutual autonomy between religious bodies and state institutions in their foundational legal authority (Philpott 2007). Thus, when religion and state evolve from being intertwined in their authority, as in medieval Europe, to a condition where religion is disestablished, as in the United States today, differentiation has occurred. But as the United States shows, differentiation need not spell desuetude. Religion can still be quite influential in politics even from a differentiated position. Tocqueville (1988 [1835]) made this argument in *Democracy in America*, and it is also the central insight of Casanova's (1994) *Public Religions in the Modern World*. However, within the broad category of "religion-friendly" differentiation—what may be found in liberal democracies today—a wide variety of relationships between religion and state exists, including states with established churches and varying degrees of "government involvement in religion," to use Fox's phrase (Fox 2007, Kuru 2007).

A fourth concept of the secular has been proposed recently by Taylor (2007) in his thorough and important book, *A Secular Age*. Secular, for him, is not the decline of religion but a type of social context, developed most distinctively in the North Atlantic, in which religious faith is held with an awareness that it is one of many options rather than simply an unproblematic feature of the architecture of the universe.

For most people, though, the more intuitive concepts of the secular are ones that carry negative connotations for religion. There are five of these, four of which can be described better as secularization, the process of religious decline. The first of these—i.e., the fifth concept of the secular—means a decline in religion as a belief that individuals hold. Secularization occurs when fewer people adhere to the tenets of religious faiths. The sixth concept is a decline in religion practice and community, which can occur even without a decline in individual belief. Sociologist Grace Davie (1990), for instance, has charted a trend in Europe of "belief without belonging." The seventh concept of the secular, also rendered as secularization, is one in which differentiation manifests the decline of religion's influence. Contrary to concept 3, not only does religious authority become detached from political authority in its prerogatives but religion also has less and less influence over politics altogether. Differentiation, here, is a phase in the long collapse of a supernova.

An eighth concept of the secular is an important variation on the seventh. In this one, too, religion loses its political influence, but not through spontaneous decline. Instead, political regimes intentionally suppress it. Here, secularization is a product of the hostile form of integrationism described above. Such secularization need not at all correspond to the decline of religious belief or practice but is the product of deliberate efforts to marginalize it. It is found in most Communist regimes. Another version resides in the French Revolution and its liberal republican legacy in European politics, emblemized in France's 1905 Law on the Separation of the Churches and State, which seeks not to eradicate religion but to subject it to strict state controls. A more sweeping version was then planted in Muslim soil in the Republic of Turkey, founded by Kemal Ataturk in 1923, and replicated in Arab nationalist regimes following World War II.

Finally, a ninth concept takes the form of a normative or ideological claim. Secularism is a set of beliefs that advocates the marginalization of religion from other spheres of life.

To say that scholarship on global politics in the field of political science is secular means

primarily this: The dominant theories in this field assume that the states, nations, international organizations, parties, classes, businesses, interest groups, nongovernmental organizations, and lobbies that carry on politics pursue ends that include power, conquest, freedom, wealth, a redistribution of wealth, welfare provision, human rights, justice, environmental cleanliness, and other goals, but they do not pursue religious ends and are not influenced by religious actors. Such theories reason as if religion has disappeared from politics. Of the nine concepts, it is concept 7 that they manifest most—secularization as a decline in the influence of religious actors on politics—although they also describe perfectly well concept 8, the secularization that regimes effect. Some of the same theories, especially in their earliest versions, also embody concept 9: Religion has disappeared—and that is a good thing! Here, the normative complements the descriptive.

But if theories of global politics are secular in this way, why did they become so? Because, I answer, they were formed in response to historical political developments that themselves manifest concept 7 or 8, ones in which religion declined in its influence on the state, whether because of its overall decline or because of the efforts of the politically powerful to subordinate it. Some of the earliest articulators of these theories interpreted these secularizing developments through philosophical and theological convictions that lent them an aura of historical inevitability and an imprimatur of normative approbation.

Just what were these historical developments? The earliest and most foundational was the formation of the sovereign-states system at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648—or at least it occurred around the time of Westphalia. A small literature now exists debating whether Westphalia truly was the origin of modern international relations (Krasner 1993, Nexon 2009, Osiander 2001, Philpott 2001, Straumann 2007, Teschke 2003). What can be said with relative certainty is that during roughly the generation surrounding the peace,

the long transmogrification of the continent from the medieval structure of authority to the modern states system was consolidated. The High Middle Ages, roughly from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, was the apogee of what may be called integrationism, or lack of differentiation, between religious and political authority. Up and down its hierarchy, church officials exercised authority that was, from a modern perspective, temporal. Kings, nobles, and the Holy Roman Emperor wielded influence over religious affairs, including the armed enforcement of doctrinal orthodoxy. Christians conceived of Europe as a *Respublica Christiana*, a united civilization in which no one held sovereignty.

Westphalia was a decisive defeat for this structure. What took shape in the period surrounding the peace was a sovereign-states system, the authority structure that yields the subject matter of international relations (politics between states) and comparative politics (analogous politics within two or more states). The Westphalian synthesis, as this authority structure might be called, consists of five strands, each involving the secularization of concept 8, a differentiation of religion and politics that left religion weaker and far more subordinated to the state than it was in the Middle Ages or even in the sixteenth century (Philpott 2002).

The first strand was the victory of the sovereign state, a form of political organization in which a single locus of authority was supreme within a territory, and the attendant diminishment of the transnational authority of the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope.

Second was a proscription of intervention, which was to become a defining norm of the international system by the eighteenth century. Since enforcement of religious uniformity had been the main reason for armed intervention after 1517, culminating in the Thirty Years War, this norm also embodied the weakening of religion's political role.

The third strand of the Westphalian synthesis was a stronger subordination of religion to the authority of the state than had been seen in Europe since prior to the

Middle Ages. Widespread on the continent was a pattern of "Erastianism," or strong state governance over church affairs; rare on the continent was the principled (as opposed to tactical or provisional) practice of religious freedom. Not only did the Catholic Church become differentiated from the state on a continental scale insofar as it was stripped of its medieval temporal powers, but local European churches generally declined in their political influence. Over the ensuing three and a half centuries, the states system would come to encompass a wide variety of religion-state relationships, differentiated and integrated, consensually and conflictually (Fox 2007, Philpott 2007). In some countries, enduring religious freedom began to emerge; the U.S. Constitution was a landmark. Here, religion could be influential from an institutionally differentiated position. But the world would come to see theocracies as well as dictatorships—Communist, fascist, Arab nationalist—that would harshly repress and even seek to eliminate religion.

A fourth strand, complementing the third, was a sharp decrease in the practice of temporal powers by religious authorities—holding office, levying taxes, and ruling large tracts of land. Although the Papal States and ecclesiastical temporal privileges elsewhere continued to exist, they were becoming ever rarer. The Protestant Reformation of the previous century had served as a major impetus for this trend.

The fifth and final strand was the rise of nationalism as a source of identity. Although a previous wave of scholarship placed the origins of nationalism in nineteenth-century European industrialization (Anderson 1983, Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1992), more recent scholarship traces nationalism in Britain, France, Spain, Germany, Sweden, and elsewhere to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and earlier and stresses the central place of religion in fashioning these national identities (Colley 1992, Hastings 1997, Marx 2003, Smith 2003a). Because it is in the intrinsic character of national identities to direct the people's loyalty toward the state, nationalism served

to reinforce further the Westphalian authority structure.

Secularization of this sort—differentiation as religious decline—continued apace in European history. The next major landmark was the French Revolution. Although its Rights of Man advanced several liberal freedoms, the revolution conceived of religious freedom narrowly and individualistically. Bishops and priests were required to take an oath of loyalty and were imprisoned and killed upon refusal. Thus the state sought to control the Church. The revolution's anticlericalism lived on in liberal republican movements in Western Europe and in Latin America during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as well as in socialist movements and in Otto von Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* in Germany. Under attack from liberalism, the Church clung to a medieval doctrine that prescribed its own establishment as the religion of the realm in majority Catholic countries and the denial of religious freedom to minorities. The Church fought back. But by the early twentieth century, liberals had eroded its influence on European politics and society considerably, especially in the matter of education.

Political philosopher Timothy Samuel Shah (2011) argues that secularization—conceived largely as concept 8 would have it, a subordination of religion to the power of the state—reached its global high-water mark between roughly 1917 and 1967. During this time, those ideologies and political movements with the greatest momentum were secular, albeit sometimes articulated and pursued with the fervor and all-encompassing spirit of religions. The year 1917 was, of course, the year of the Bolshevik Revolution, the foundation of a brutally secularizing regime. Virtually every Communist regime that would take power—in China, Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, and elsewhere—imposed secularism in a similar spirit. Fascism in Nazi Germany developed its own form of state religion, suppressed dissenters, and sought to eradicate the Jewish religion altogether. Nationalist movements in colonial and other nonwestern states were by and large secular ones, influenced by European

liberalism, sometimes socialism, and doctrines of modernization—Nehru's India, Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese nationalism, and movements across Africa. Like-spirited secular nationalist regimes arose throughout the Arab world after World War II, modeled on the Republic of Turkey, established by Kemal Ataturk in 1924. Under the influence of European liberal parties, virtually every Latin American state had disestablished its Catholic Church by 1925 (Gill 1998). In Western Europe, France's 1905 Law on the Separation of the Churches and State, establishing "laïcité" as the principle for the realm, both achieved and symbolized liberalism's gains. In the United States, what sociologist Christian Smith (2003c) has called "the secular revolution" rapidly swept through elite social, political, and intellectual sectors in the early decades of the twentieth century. Buddhism remained by and large a quietistic religion, unengaged in social and political affairs.

To this global trend of secularization there were exceptions of course: Gandhi's independence campaign, the U.S. civil rights movement, the reestablishment of Christian Democratic parties in Western Europe after World War II and their influence on launching European federalism, the formation of a Buddhist state in Sri Lanka in the 1950s, and the early organization of Hindu nationalism and Islamic revivalism were all propelled by religion. But in historical perspective, religion's social and political influence was at its ebb.

It is no wonder, then, that by the 1950s and 1960s, the secularization thesis found wide assent among western intellectuals. Rooted in the Enlightenment and in the subsequent thought of major western intellectuals such as Marx, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Freud, Dewey, Durkheim, and Weber, the secularization thesis encompassed concepts 5, 6, and 7 (see **Table 1**), holding that religion would decline in belief, practice, and public influence alike, smothered by the juggernauts of industrialization, democratization, urbanization, rationalization, freedom, modern science, and economic progress. Some, but not all, of these intellectuals also observed and advocated the subordination of religion to the state or other elites (concepts 8 and 9). Though articulated most explicitly and systematically by sociologists (Berger 1967, Bruce 1996, Martin 1978, Wilson 1982), the secularization thesis has been widely held in the social sciences, philosophy, and the humanities in general. But it was not intellectual constructs alone that favored the secularization thesis; the world itself seemed to prove it.

Secular thinking is also ensconced in modern theories of international relations and comparative politics within political science (Keohane 2002). Its place in international relations is demonstrated masterfully in one of the major recent books on religion and political science, Hurd's (2008) *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*. Secularism, which she calls "one of the most important organizing principles of modern politics," takes two distinct forms in international relations. First, a "laicist" form views religion as destined to extinction (concepts 5, 6, 7, and 8) and as an obstacle to progress and justice (concept 9). Second, a "Judeo-Christian" version views religion favorably as the historic basis for the secularism of modern western liberal democracy— the religion-friendly version of concept 3—and predicts conflict with the parts of the world that have not yet embraced this political form. Hurd then undertakes to show how these models come into conflict with competing, nonwestern constructions of religion and the secular. She uses political Islam, Turkey, Iran, and relations between the European Union and Turkey and between the United States and Iran as case studies.

Hurd's important book reveals and charts secularist thinking in international relations thought and practice. She might have extended the reach of her argument by showing more thoroughly than she does the secular character of the leading traditional theories of international relations, realism and liberalism (Doyle 1997). Modern realism's analytical assumptions (that states live in an anarchical system and must overridingly pursue power and security),

as well as this tradition's moral counsel (that states ought to pursue such interests wisely, unconstrained by moral absolutes or Christian precepts), took root in the milieu of the historical conflicts that led to the secularizing Peace of Westphalia. These assumptions and prescriptions were espoused by thinkers who rejected traditional Christianity as the foundation for political order: Machiavelli, Hobbes, and to some extent, even the churchman Cardinal Richelieu. In the case of Hobbes, his realism was also anchored in his materialist epistemology and in his desire that religion be subordinated to the state for the sake of peace.

The early modern realists' assumptions about politics also characterized the thought of realists who revived the tradition in post–World War II America: Hans Morgenthau, George Kennan, Henry Kissinger, and Kenneth Waltz (Smith 1986). Among these, it was Morgenthau who, like Hobbes, tethered his realist politics to skeptical philosophical assumptions, at least until the latter end of his writing career. His intellectual formation indeed involved an almost religious encounter with the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, which convinced him of the pervasiveness of power in shaping all social reality (Frei 2001). Though a theologian, Niebuhr (1952, 1953) broadly shared the realist outlook, arguing that in a world pervaded by power, efforts by states to pursue a religious or otherwise transcendental ideal would meet ironic defeat. Statesmen instead ought to choose the lesser evil.

The liberal tradition is more optimistic that states can cooperate for power and prosperity, especially when enabled by international law and institutions, democratic regimes, liberal ideas, and economic interdependence, but it has rarely acknowledged religion as an end of states. Its secularism stems from its provenance in the Enlightenment, whose theorists by and large embraced what they saw as religion's rational, knowable, and universal ethical core while discarding its rituals, its claims about supernatural revelation, and its ecclesial hierarchies.

Much the same applies to leading theories of comparative politics. Max Weber, although he famously argued that the Protestant Reformation shaped modern capitalism, also argued that capitalism went on to become an "iron cage" that outlived its religious origins. Generally, he thought that a secularism of disenchantment characterized the modern world. Karl Marx, of course, thought that religion was a superstructure and not a propellant of history. In the 1950s and 1960s, modernization theory, a kindred soul to the secularization thesis, held great prestige. Subsequent attacks on and alternatives to modernization, including even cultural approaches, left little room for religion as a causal force in politics.

Secular theories, then, sprang forth from the very real secularization of the modern world as well as from the assumptions of some of its most influential intellectual interpreters. That these theories are no longer adequate is in good part due to a global resurgence of religion as a political influence. According to Shah (2008), the resurgence began to gain momentum about four decades ago. If the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 was the inaugural ball for the peak period of secularization, the Six Day War between Israel and Egypt signified the beginning of religion's global resurgence 50 years later in 1967. It both awakened a religious conscience among Israeli Jews and crippled the prestige of secular nationalism among Arab Muslims. It was in the 1970s and 1980s that an Islamic resurgence took place, its signature event being the Iranian revolution of 1979. In the mid-1960s, Hindu nationalist parties began to win electoral victories, building momentum toward becoming the electoral force that would eventually unseat the Congress Party, which had ruled India for half a century according to its secular modernist ideology. The Second Vatican Council of 1962–1965 yielded a new vision for social and political engagement in the Catholic Church, a vision that, among its other effects, became a major engine of the worldwide "third wave" of democratization that began in 1974 (Huntington 1991, Philpott 2007).

Across South and East Asia, Buddhists took up political action, advocating a Buddhist homeland in Sri Lanka or embracing an

"engaged Buddhism" that promotes human rights, tolerance, and environmentalism (Queen & King 1996, Tambiah 1993). During the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, Evangelical Protestantism and Pentecostalism grew meteorically in North and South America, Africa, and parts of East Asia, taking on a variety of political forms (Freston 2001, 2008; Lumsdaine 2008; Ranger 2008). The United States saw the rise of the Christian right in the 1970s and more recently a range of other religious voices weighing in on the national political scene. Even in Europe, religion has become a more significant political issue in recent years, propelling opposition movements to Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, manifested in the growth of the Islamic population, and embedded in debates about the place of Christianity in Europe's political identity. By the 1990s, several books recognized these convergent trends and declared "the revenge of God" (Kepel 1994), "the desecularization of the world" (Berger 1999b), and other statements of religion's rise (Barber 1995, Casanova 1994, Friedman 1999, Juergensmeyer 1993). With uncommon humility, one of the most famous articulators of the secularization theory in the 1960s, sociologist Peter Berger, renounced his previous stance in 1999, declaring the world to be "as furiously religious as it ever was" (Berger 1999a).

Once they have come to view the present with a new set of assumptions, social scientists often look anew at familiar episodes of the past through the same assumptions. In *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations*, I argued that the Peace of Westphalia was itself in good part the product of the Protestant Reformation, the political theology that it spawned, and the 130 years of war that it begat (Philpott 2001). A new book by Nexon (2009), *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*, also argues for the Reformation's integral importance to the continental politics of early modern Europe, though with different emphases. Nexon views the Reformation as less important to the consolidation of the international system (in fact, he questions Westphalia's status as its founding moment) and

more important as the cause of a general crisis in early modern Europe involving the challenge of a transnational religious network to the dominance of composite actors—the Holy Roman Empire, dynastic unions, and the like. What both of our works imply is that even if modern international relations was itself a secularizing authority structure, it was incubated in a period in which politics was driven mainly by religious conflict.

Aside from a resurgence of religion late in the history of the sovereign-states system and the importance of religion early in the same history, a final problem for secular assumptions in political science is the general lack of global secularization in the sense of concepts 5 and 6, religious belief and practice. Although the focus here is on religion's influence on politics, these other dimensions corroborate the weakness of the thesis. Over the course of the twentieth century, the percentage of the world's population adhering to Christianity declined only slightly from 34.5% to 33.1%; the percentage of Muslims increased markedly from 12.3% to 19.6%; the portion of Hindus increased from 12.5% to 13.4%; and Buddhists declined in their share of the world population from 7.8% to 5.9% (Barrett et al. 2001). A study conducted by the World Values Survey across >56 countries from the 1980s to 2004 showed that worldwide belief in God actually increased from 80% to 83%. The only region of the world that reported a decrease was Western Europe, where the decline was only slight, from 81% to 78%. In Eastern Europe, though, belief in God increased from 68% to 78%. Even more dramatically, in China, those who placed at least some importance on religion increased from 22% to 36%. In India, the same figure held steady at a high 93%, and those who said that religion was very important rose from 49% in 1990 to 57% in 2001 (Grim 2008). During a century in which religion was under attack from regimes across the globe and elite sectors in the West, then, religious belief generally did not decline (Stark 1999).

For all this, the secularization theory still has latter-day defenders and even a certain amount

of evidence in its favor (Bruce 1996, 2002; Wilson 1982). Among the most innovative of recent defenders are Norris & Inglehart (2004). At the center of their argument is the classic functionalist theory that explains religion as a response to a lack of "existential security"—the "feeling that survival is secure enough that it can be taken for granted" (p. 4). On this basis, they predict that religious belief and practice will decline as security increases, as it does in modern industrial democracies, especially those with generous welfare provisions. Global data from the World Values Survey, they show, provide much evidence for the inverse correlation between religion and economic development. The United States, one of the world's wealthiest nations, is admittedly an outlier, with very high levels of religiosity. But this is explainable, they argue, by America's high levels of inequality and its weak welfare net—both inducing the anxiety of economic insecurity—as well as an inverse relationship between wealth and religiosity within the United States.

Norris & Inglehart make clear, though, that the world's population is not becoming more secular in the aggregate. Because populations are increasing far more rapidly in poor countries than in rich ones, the actual number of religious people, and traditionally religious people at that, is increasing. In a 2006 public forum, Inglehart stated that "there are more people alive today with traditional religious beliefs than ever before in history, and they're a larger percentage of the world's population than they were 20 years ago" (Inglehart 2006). He also ventured that even in rich postindustrial societies, although traditional beliefs may be declining, "spiritual concerns are growing not shrinking" and a religion of self-expression may be playing a bigger role. It might also be asked whether, even if rich and egalitarian countries offer high levels of economic security, other threats to "existential security," such as terrorism and global warming, predict the persistence of religion. Even were Norris & Inglehart correct that security secularizes, the world at large is not becoming a more secular place, just as they aver.

HOW COMPARATIVE POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS HAVE BEGUN TO FIND RELIGION

The identification of secular assumptions in political science scholarship and the global rise of religion's political influence have together cleared the way for political scientists to turn their analytical attention to this influence. And so they have: A small corpus of scholarship on religion and global politics now exists. One of the important ways in which this scholarship varies is in the extent to which political scientists treat religion as a distinct phenomenon. What does it mean for religion to be distinct? In contrast to most other actors and influences that political scientists study—political parties, legislatures, courts, unions, nationalist movements, lobbies, nongovernmental organizations, international organizations, and ideologies—religions are not first and foremost concerned with or defined by what political orders do or look like, that is, their principles of legitimacy, structure, policies, or pursuits. Rather, they are communities of belief and practice oriented around claims about the ultimate ground of existence. All of the major world religions long predate both Westphalia and the world's embryonic modern nations and modern states. None of them fits easily into the boundaries of any one state. Hinduism and Judaism come closest, perhaps, but even they have large diasporas. The largest religions, Christianity and Islam, respectively contain 2.1 and 1.5 billion people. The best single concept for distinguishing religious communities from other communities—describing the fact that religions are both transnational and composed of large populations, that they are unconfined by borders both in their organizing principle and in their demographic reality—is arguably Rudolph's (1997) "transnational civil society."

When religious actors involve themselves in the politics of particular states and international organizations, they do so conditionally, according to these larger communities and

commitments. Their approaches are variegated, ranging from the political quietism of the Amish to al-Qaeda's rejection of the state and the states system to the engagement of Protestant theologian Adolph Harnack, who wrote speeches for the German Kaiser justifying his initiation of World War I in 1914, thus making his aims virtually indistinguishable from the state's (Lilla 2007). The vast majority of religious actors accept the legitimacy of states in general but demand certain kinds of states and policies in particular. What is important to understand about religious actors is that religious politics, even when it converges with that of the state, emanates from beliefs, practices, and communities that themselves are prior to politics.

The political scientists who have recently written about religion have recognized the importance of its distinct character to greater and lesser degrees. Let us begin with those who recognize this distinctiveness the least.

RATIONAL CHOICE ANALYSES OF RELIGION'S POLITICAL INFLUENCE

A handful of studies of religion and politics have deployed the logic and methods of rational choice analysis. To say that they treat religion less distinctively is not to say that they treat religion reductively, explaining the behavior of religious actors as nothing more than the pursuit of money or power. It is rather that they simplify the ends—i.e., the preferences—of religious actors to goals like "maximizing adherents" or "maximizing societal influence," and in this way avoid deep analysis of doctrines, theology, ritual and practices, or internal structure. By making analytically wieldy assumptions, they then purport to explain important political outcomes such as the rise of Christian Democracy or the Catholic Church's stance toward democracy in Latin America through the incentive structure that these actors' political and institutional environments create. To observe that rational choice analyses treat religion less distinctively than do other approaches is not

a criticism. One cannot rule out a priori that the behavior of religious actors can be explained in this way. Indeed, each of these analyses is conducted with admirable rigor and care.

Exemplary is the work of one of the leading political scientists of religion, Anthony Gill. In *Rendering unto Caesar: The Catholic Church and the State in Latin America*, Gill (1998) asks why national Latin American Catholic churches varied in their decision either to support authoritarian regimes or to oppose them in the name of democracy in the 1960s and 1970s. His surprising answer is Protestant competition. Deploying rational choice logic, he assumes that churches aim to maximize primarily membership and secondarily financial resources to conduct their operations. In these pursuits, an effective strategy is an alliance with the state, which can supply advantageous laws and channel financial resources to churches in return for the unique form of legitimation that churches can provide to the regime. Enter Protestant evangelism. Facing the siphoning off of their membership, especially among the poor, who allegedly prefer democracy, Catholic churches have an incentive to support democratization. They become democratizers, Gill argues, in places where they face Protestant competition.

Gill takes religion seriously. Rational choice analysis does not always posit preferences for wealth and power but sometimes assumes ideational ends. For Gill, membership is to be maximized because it leads to salvation; it is because of its message that the Church possesses the "resource" of legitimation; financial resources are needed to sustain the Church's wide range of activities, including employing priests. Still, Gill's description of religious preferences is a thin one, containing little analysis of distinct doctrines or practices. The question then becomes whether the ends in play are adequate for explanation or whether a thicker description of religious actors and their motivations is required.

An alternative explanation for the political stances of national Catholic churches in Latin America is their comparative receptivity to certain developments in the global Catholic

Church: the Vatican's embrace of human rights (especially religious freedom) in the Second Vatican Council of 1962 and 1965; its doctrines of economic development and the "preferential option for the poor," also stressed in the Church's encyclicals of the 1960s and 1970s; and liberation theology, a call for radical political and economic change that received the endorsement of the Latin American bishops at a conference in Medellín, Colombia in 1968. All of these are elements of a doctrinal evolution that is specific to the Catholic Church in a particular stage of history. Gill (1998) does test quantitatively for the role of Vatican II ideas, using the age of bishops as a proxy for commitment to fresh thinking, and finds that it correlates positively with democratic stances but without statistical significance. But this method underestimates the role of ideas about justice. It was not just bishops but also religious orders, lower clerics, lay movements, and grassroots "base communities" who held the new ideas. Descriptive histories show that the more widely these ideas were held among a nation's Catholics, the more likely their church was to take up oppositional democratic politics. Brazil and Chile led the pack; Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala came around in the late 1970s and early 1980s; and others, such as Argentina and Paraguay, remained allied or only feebly opposed to authoritarian regimes (Philpott 2007).

Some of the assumptions behind Gill's Protestant-competition explanation are questionable, too. The poor do not necessarily favor democratic regimes, as is clear in cases where both they and Protestant churches support authoritarian governments or remain apolitical (Freston 2008, Sigmund 1999). The poor's choice for Protestantism stemmed as much from the availability of pastoral services, strong community and family ties, a stress on personal piety, and the availability of certain forms of worship as it did on politics. Support for democracy was not necessarily the best way to bring the poor back to the Catholic Church. Nor is it clear logically why support for democracy was the best response to Protestant competition, which also could have been quelled by

allying with dictatorships and lobbying them to suppress dissenters, as had occurred so often before in Catholic states. Arguably, it is only with a rich understanding of beliefs, doctrines, practices, and the particular predicament of Catholic churches in Latin America as a religious form of organization that their political stances can be understood. Although Gill's work is an impressive departure from the dominance of secularization theory, explaining religious politics may require a thicker treatment of religion than rational choice analysis will allow.

Gill (2008) argues from a similar theoretical framework—and does so with similar sophistication and rich historical research—in *The Political Origins of Religious Liberty*, where he seeks to explain why religious liberty emerges in the laws and constitutions of political orders: colonial British America, Mexico, and Russia and the Baltics. Defying conventional explanations that stress the intellectual origins of religious liberty in the evolution of doctrine and popularly held ideas, Gill turns to interests for his answer, especially to the political and economic interests of political rulers and the institutional interests of religious leaders in surviving, growing, and expanding. In colonial America, for instance, a high level of religious pluralism that allowed no one religion to dominate, combined with the desire of colonial governments to promote trade and to unite against the British, led to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution once the country was unified. Gill is careful to note that interests do not explain the entirety of governmental restrictions on religious freedom and that ideas play a role, too.

In many cases, though, ideology arguably plays a large enough role in religious liberty that it ought to be incorporated into an explanation rather than left untheorized. Even in the American case, Gill leaves out of his theoretical framework (though he does acknowledge) an important respect in which ideas created the very condition of proliferating pluralism in the colonies: He omits the Protestant Reformation. Although many Protestant factions did not favor religious freedom, it was the internal logic of Protestantism that created factions, a key

structural condition for religious freedom. Outside of the colonial American case, as Shah (2008) points out in his review of Gill, ideology is especially salient in regimes that are founded on a set of ideas with strong implications for religion and secularism: revolutionary Iran, Communist regimes, or Arab nationalist regimes such as the Republic of Turkey of Kemal Ataturk, with its ideals of nationalism and modernization.

In the same company as Gill, offering a sophisticated and historically rich rational choice analysis of the political pursuits of a religious actor, is Kalyvas's (1996) *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe*, a study of the formation of Christian Democratic parties in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe. From a distance, it might seem straightforward that Christian Democratic parties were a way for the Catholic Church to preserve its influence in European politics and society during a time of fierce secularization. But in fact the Catholic Church hierarchy was quite chary toward these parties' formation. Kalyvas specifies the Church's preferences as maximizing its social influence and its hierarchical control, two pursuits that could at times be at odds. Under intense attack from the anticlerical campaigns of liberal republican parties and governments, the Church sought to mobilize movements of laypeople to resist through solidarity and mutual cooperation—but cautiously, fearing that an alternative hierarchy might result. It was when these movements decided to stand for elected public office and realized unexpected success in doing so—in Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, and Italy—that their lay leaders decided to turn them into full-fledged political parties, far from the intentions of the Church.

By and large, Kalyvas's account is convincing; his book stands as the authoritative text on the formation of Christian Democratic parties. As with Gill in *The Political Origins of Religious Liberty*, though, there is a sense in which Kalyvas takes for granted a central part of his story: the preference structure of the Catholic Church. He describes it only briefly

and explains it hardly at all. How did an institution with a strong interest not only in maximizing a certain kind of societal influence but also in maintaining the integrity of an inherited hierarchical structure come to exist and to operate in nineteenth-century European politics in the first place? It is difficult to answer this question apart from the theology and historical evolution of the Catholic Church. This religious community was built on an ecclesiology stressing the visible, organic unity of its members, centered on the authority of its bishops, especially the Pope. The Church was committed during the nineteenth century to a quasi-medieval political theology that called for its establishment wherever it was a majority and rejected a deep principle of religious freedom, and it remained sharply at odds with the notion of freedom espoused by the French Revolution and its liberal republican legatees. Revealing is a contrast with European Protestant churches of the time, which stressed visible unity and episcopal authority far less, were far closer to liberalism in their political theology, and, outside of the Netherlands, formed no major political parties of their own. Theology, ecclesiology, and history matter.

Still another rational choice analysis of the Catholic Church's relationship to European Christian Democracy is Warner's (2000) *Confessions of an Interest Group: The Catholic Church and Political Parties in Europe*. Warner's focus is on the period 1944–1957 and on the Church's strategy of forming (or not forming) alliances with Christian Democratic parties in France, Germany, and Italy in the wake of World War II. Viewing the Church as an interest group, she, like Kalyvas and Gill, describes its decision to ally with a political party as a cost-benefit calculation. Yet her description of the Church's interests is wider and more nuanced than Gill's or Kalyvas's, and she recognizes more variation in the interests of national Catholic churches. The Church seeks to expand its membership and to preserve its hierarchy, to be sure, but it also seeks specific policies concerning education, welfare policies, European integration, and other matters, tailoring these demands to

the particular national environment. It chooses whether to ally with political parties based on complex and particular calculations, which take this range of interests into account but also consider its ideology, its history within a country, including its experience under fascism, and its expectations about whether that party will deliver on its policies. Warner's argument, then, shares the strength of rational choice analysis—namely, careful theoretical attention to the cost-benefit calculations by which religious actors pursue their preferences in a given strategic environment—while it improves on the other analyses by giving more attention to where these ends come from in the first place.

TAPPING RELIGION'S DISTINCTIVENESS

Diverse other recent writings on religion by political scientists pick up on Warner's cue but travel even further in stressing religion's distinctiveness—its theology, its history, its internal structure and practices, and its particular relationships with states. These make the break with the secularization assumptions much more strongly.

The manifesto of this approach is arguably Thomas's (2004) *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations*. This "global resurgence," he argues, challenges not only secularization theory but also international relations theory, which contains the assumptions of secularization theory. To "bring religion back in," Thomas argues, international relations theory must do more than insert religion into existing theories, concepts, and paradigms or identify religion as a form of soft power and acknowledge it as a cause. Instead, it must recognize how religion constitutes the very identity of politically influential social movements, and even, to an important degree, the international system itself. For instance, he argues provocatively that the ideas by which a hegemonic United States fashioned the post-World War II international system were pervaded by Protestantism. More generally, he aims to demonstrate how religion shapes the character of international conflict, international cooperation, diplomacy and peacebuilding, civil society across the globe, and developmental economics. Drawing heavily on the ideas of philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, Thomas claims that it is only when religion is recognized as an alternative narrative to the Enlightenment and other secular worldviews on which contemporary social science is grounded that its influence on politics can be understood.

Asserting the distinctiveness and influence of religion against secularization theory are also recent works on religion's relationship to states (Fox 2007, Kuru 2007, Stepan 2001). In a seminal statement on religion and state relationships, Stepan (2001) argues that secular perspectives, including voices in contemporary liberal philosophy, assume that tolerance, respect for pluralism, and democracy require religion's sequestration from the political sphere. In fact, he explains, principled pluralism and robust liberal democracy require the "twin tolerations," in which the state recognizes the public and active role of religion while religions refrain from seeking antidemocratic constitutional prerogatives for themselves and from denying religious freedom to others. A wide variety of religion-state relationships is compatible with the twin tolerations, including the several established churches and many instances of government support for religion in Western Europe. Incompatible are theocracies, to be sure, but also the many forms of secular regimes that suppress religious freedom—communist and Arab nationalist ones, for instance.

Fox (2007) brilliantly documents the variety of religion-state relationships by using 62 variables to capture "Government Involvement in Religion" (GIR) in 175 states between 1990 and 2002. Several fascinating conclusions result. Challenging secularization theory most are his findings that GIR increased globally from 1990 to 2002, especially through religious discrimination, regulation, and legislation (although the increase was uneven from area to area), and that economic modernization is actually linked to higher levels of GIR (Fox 2007, p. 313).

Predictably, democracies have less GIR than nondemocracies, but less predictably, they exhibit a wide variety of GIR (p. 314). Fox shows that most states—149 out of 175—give preference to some religions over others, either through support or restriction (p. 353). Few states have true separation of religion and state—between 8% and 22.3%, depending on exactly how it is defined—with the United States having the world's single largest degree of separation (p. 359). These and other interesting findings arise from a nuanced, particularized, and thorough approach to understanding how religion interacts with the state.

Can Islam be democratic? Is it prone to war and terrorism? Given Islam's contemporary importance, welcome is the arrival of works in political science that seek to theorize Islamic politics through a close analysis of Islamic ideas and institutions. Schwedler (2006) confronts the common question of whether Islamic parties and movements become more moderate when their surrounding political system becomes more open and democratic. Her look at two cases of political opening, Jordan and Yemen, shows that in one case the Islamic party moderated whereas in the other it did not. What explains the difference is the nature of each country's regime—i.e., Yemen's monarch does not compete for power and thus constricts space for political engagement—as well as the degree of democracy and participation within the Islamic movement and the content of each party's ideology. Here, the ideas and institutions unique to each country and movement matter.

Similar in spirit is Wickham's (2002) study of the rise in the political engagement of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist movement criminalized by a regime that is built on secular ideals and that rules by permitting, supporting, and thereby co-opting nonradical forms of Islam. Drawing on social movement theory, Wickham shows that the Muslim Brotherhood's rise was not simply a response to the grievances of traditional Muslims but the result of its ideology and its mobilizing strategy, predominantly one of seeking to penetrate the governance of civil society organizations. At the formal political level, members of the Brotherhood succeeded in winning elected office but not in standing for elections as a collectivity, because the regime refuses to allow it. Here again, the methodological stress is on the local configuration of ideas and institutions.

A third analysis of Islam, that of Euben (1999), is a work of comparative political theory. Euben proposes to understand Islamic radicalism through an interpretive method of thick description that studies the ideas of groups on their own terms. Analyzing the writings of radical Egyptian Islamist Sayyid Qutb, Euben argues that his "fundamentalism" cannot be understood simply as the product of frustration with material conditions or with national, liberal, and socialist ideals. Rather, Qutb articulates a wholesale rejection of rationalism, sovereignty, and secularism in western Enlightenment thought and attempts to construct a radically distinct Islamic counternarrative—one that does not wholly succeed in escaping western modernism, Euben argues. Echoing Thomas, Euben pleads that efforts to understand religion cannot be confined to western secularist assumptions.

Several other political scientists also stress theology, history, and particular relationships with the state in probing religion's influence on politics. Toft's (2007) work on religion and civil wars shows that one third of civil wars from 1940 to 2000 were fueled by religious ideas or identities and that religious civil wars, precisely because of the nature of religious claims, are deadlier and last longer than nonreligious ones. Hertzke (2004) studies the coalitional politics among evangelicals, Jews, and other faith communities to lobby the U.S. Congress to pass the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, an organizational effort that spilled over into lobbying for peace in Sudan, measures against sexual trafficking, and other humanitarian causes. Fetzer & Soper (2005) explain Western European states' varying political approaches to their Muslim immigrant populations according to each state's historical tradition of church-state relations. Other important works, too, have insightfully studied the role of

Muslims in western democracies (Cesari 2006, Klausen 2005, Laurence 2006).

Several edited volumes approach religion and politics through similar approaches, including *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective: the One, the Few, and the Many* (Jelen & Wilcox 2002); *Religion in an Expanding Europe* (Byrnes & Katzenstein 2006), which compares the approaches of Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Islam to European unity; *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism* (Banchoff 2007); *Religion, Democracy, and Democratization* (Anderson 2005); and *The Catholic Church and the Nation-State: Comparative Perspectives* (Manuel 2007). Each of these helps to build the small but growing corpus of work on religion in the field of political science.

HOW POLITICAL SCIENCE CAN FIND MORE RELIGION

If it is true, as I have argued, that religion's influence on global politics still outsizes its place in political science, then much work is left to be done. At least five areas are ripe for development.

First, a better understanding of religion's relationship to modernization is needed. Shah & Toft (2006) and Hansen (2006) have turned secularization theory on its head by arguing that modernization—economic and technological development, democratization, and so on—actually strengthens religion (see also Fox 2007). This claim merits more systematic testing and analysis.

Second, more studies are needed that take religious actors themselves, rather than states or other political actors, as the unit of analysis and then seek to explain the wildly diverse politics that religious actors adopt. Why do some religious communities favor democracy while others do not? Answers to this question could help us to assess better the hotly disputed question of Islam's potential for democracy. Why do some religious communities undertake terrorism? Engage in civil war? Favor (or disfavor) economic development? Take up peacemaking, dialogue and reconciliation? Favor human rights, international law, and international organizations? The relative influences of a religious actor's size, internal structure, intensity of belief and practice, theology, tradition, historical relationship to the state, and other factors are all worth exploring.

Third, far more explanation of the character of relationships between religion and state is needed. Kuru (2007) points the way, drawing on ideology and historical evolution to explain religion-state relationships in Turkey, France, and the United States. Fox's (2007) analysis of the immense variety of religion-state relationships reveals the enormous terrain that is yet to be explored.

Fourth, political science scholarship might explain religion's influence on large-scale shifts and innovations in the international system. If religion shaped the origins of the international system at Westphalia, then might it also have shaped the international system at later junctures, say, after major wars? Thomas's (2004) claim about Protestantism's role in America's fashioning of the post–World War II international system is relevant here; other scholars have begun to explore religion's influence on the origins of European federation (Philpott & Shah 2006) and the end of the Cold War (Stummvoll 2007, Weigel 1992). Much remains to be done.

Fifth, more deep theorizing about religion's political influence is needed. Rational choice analysis aids an understanding of how religious actors pursue their preferences. Other scholarship gives more attention to where these preferences come from. It is here, where religion's distinctiveness is brightest, that political scientists can benefit from a better understanding of the theology, internal organization, and history of religions, and indeed of the dynamics of religious belief itself (Smith 2003b). This, in turn, requires that they invest themselves more deeply in the disciplines that yield this understanding. Just as security scholars must understand military strategy, political economists economics, and feminist scholars social and gender theory, so, too, political scientists who study religion ought to study theology and

religious studies more than most do presently. Once they do, they might well come to ask not why the political influence of religion has returned but why it ever went away. Or, better yet, why anyone ever thought that it went away.

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