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HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEWS

SECULARIZATION AND MODERNIZATION: THE FAILURE OF A 'GRAND NARRATIVE'

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ABSTRACT. *This historiographical review offers a critical reconsideration of a central component of modernization theory: the model of secularization devised within the sociology of religion, and especially the version sustained by sociologists in the UK. It compares that model with the results of historical research in a range of themes and periods, and suggests that those results are now often radically inconsistent with this sociological orthodoxy. It concludes that an older historical scenario which located in the early modern period the beginnings of a 'process' of secularization that achieved its natural completion in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries is finally untenable, and it proposes a broader, more historical conception of 'religion' able to accommodate both persistent religiosity and undoubted changes in religious behaviour.*

I

In the late twentieth century the idea of secularization was, undoubtedly, a dominant paradigm. Many sociologists of 'religion' (by which they meant, more narrowly, Latin Christianity in Europe and North America) wrote confidently about 'the secularization model', 'the secularizing process',[1] or 'the secularization paradigm'.[2] Indeed, 'the paradigm of secularization has been the main

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[1] Bryan Wilson, 'Secularization: the inherited model', in Philip E. Hammond, ed., *The sacred in a secular age: toward revision in the scientific study of religion* (Berkeley, CA, 1985), pp. 9–20, at 12, 14. The editor introduced secularization: 'Even today, scholars do not – and probably cannot – doubt the essential truth of the thesis', p. 1. A notable exception among British sociologists of religion to this homogenizing tendency has been David Martin; for his retrospect see his *On secularization: towards a revised general theory* (Aldershot, 2005). For another notable exception see the work of Grace Davie, especially *The sociology of religion* (London, 2007): 'it is as modern to draw on the resources of religion to critique the secular as it is to draw on the resources of the secular to critique the religious', p. 1.

[2] Steve Bruce, *God is dead: secularization in the West* (Oxford, 2002), pp. xii, 1, 186 and passim. It appears as 'the secularization thesis' in Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, 'Secularization: the orthodox model', in Steve Bruce, ed., *Religion and modernization: sociologists and historians debate the secularization thesis* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 8–30. Despite this volume's offer of a debate, the sociology of the subject which is hegemonic in Britain has not subsequently allowed itself to be

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theoretical and analytical framework through which the social sciences have viewed the relationship of religion and modernity'.[3] Philosophers often took as given this sociological orthodoxy about the impact on religious belief and practice of urbanization and industrialization.[4] In a recent major work Charles Taylor attempts to 'clarify' philosophically 'what this process, often invoked, but still not very clear, amounts to'. His scenario of a 'transformation' from 'enchantment' to 'disenchantment' is nevertheless a historical one: 'How did we move from a condition where, in Christendom, people lived naively within a theistic construal', to the present, in which 'unbelief has become for many the major default option?'[5] As one historian observed, 'Despite the efforts of doubters, sceptics and adversaries, the most influential general account of religion in modern Europe, and in the modern world, remains the theory of secularization.'[6] That theory constitutes a 'metanarrative' which has resulted in the 'comparative eclipse' of research on the actual and complex history of religion.[7] Yet despite its intellectual hegemony, the paradigm displayed certain characteristics which should have suggested caution.

First, the paradigm is offered as an objective, value-free alternative to religion, especially Christianity, yet it often appears as programmatic; indeed, 'Sociology began as a contradiction of theology' and was presented as a 'replacement' of religion, which had been 'erroneous'. There was, then, a 'tension' in the sociology of religion that 'has never been entirely dispelled' between a 'scientific stance' towards religion and the urge 'to discredit it'.[8] Second, the

revised in the light of historical research. Bryan Wilson, 'Reflections on a many sided controversy', in ibid., p. 210, contended that academics now 'take secularization for granted' and dismiss 'serious attention' to religion with 'some amusement'.

[3] José Casanova, *Public religions in the modern world* (Chicago, IL, 1994), p. 211.

[4] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Secularization and moral change* (London, 1967). At least one philosopher, however, was able to draw a different conclusion even from such reductionist premises, since 'the contingency of history mocks our predictions': Leszek Kolakowski, 'The revenge of the sacred in secular culture', in Leszek Kolakowski, *Modernity on endless trial* (Chicago, IL, 1990), pp. 63–74, at 64.

[5] Charles Taylor, *A secular age* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), pp. ix, 14.

[6] Jeffrey Cox, 'Master narratives of long-term religious change', in Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf, eds., *The decline of Christendom in Western Europe 1750–2000* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 201–17, at 201.

[7] David Nash, 'Reconnecting religion with social and cultural history: secularization's failure as a master narrative', *Cultural and Social History*, 1 (2004), pp. 302–25, at 302–3.

[8] Wilson, 'Secularization: the inherited model', p. 10; idem, *Religion in sociological perspective* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 1, 5. Wilson argued for a distinction between 'secularization', an objective study, and 'secularism', a normative campaign; the contributions of secularists had been 'at best, marginal to the momentum of the process of secularization' (ibid., p. 149). It is not clear that this distinction has been securely established. Even in 1965, another sociologist had argued: 'Since there is no unitary process of secularization one cannot talk in a unitary way about the causes of secularization. The whole concept appears as a tool of counter-religious ideologies which identify the "real" element in religion for polemical purposes and then arbitrarily relate it to the notion of a unitary and irreversible process, partly for the aesthetic satisfactions found in such notions and partly as a psychological boost to the movements with

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paradigm (despite professions to the contrary) is normally singular: it takes readers to an assumed endpoint, although via different chronologies. There are not several importantly different models of the nature of secularization on offer but, ultimately, one model of how secularization happens; nor is it often tested against models of religious change which lead to quite different results.[9] Most sociologists of religion, even if making initial gestures towards alternatives, tend to revert to a confident use of the singular term. Third, the model is by now of some vintage, although this historical rootedness is never examined as an issue within sociology. The authors who framed it were such giants as Auguste Comte (1798–1857), Karl Marx (1818–83), Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), Georg Simmel (1858–1918), Max Weber (1864–1920), Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923), Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936), and Sigmund Freud (1856–1939); subsequent sociologists add refinement, qualification, and empirical data without essentially changing the structure of the model.[10]

Fourth, as has belatedly been acknowledged, this sociological paradigm describes only changes '*within industrial democracies*',[11] not everywhere in the present-day world; yet the older assumption that industrial democracies stand for other societies is in difficulty. The paradigm seldom attends to differences between societies, although historians can do so: for example, by exploring the widely differing rates and patterns of church involvement in contemporaneous cities in different countries.[12] Fifth, the paradigm tends to join together,

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which they are associated': David Martin, 'Towards eliminating the concept of secularization', in Julius Gould, ed., *Penguin survey of the social sciences, 1965* (Harmondsworth, 1965), pp. 169–82, at 176.

[9] Exceptions are a cyclical theory of religious decline and revival based on an anthropological need for meaning (for which see Daniel Bell, 'The return of the sacred? The argument on the future of religion', *British Journal of Sociology*, 28 (1977), pp. 419–49), and what has been termed the 'Stark–Bainbridge theory' of the need for supernatural compensation for the non-attainment of worldly desires, a theory which is held to contend that 'religion performs social or psychological functions sufficiently vital that it cannot disappear and hence the appearance of decline must either mask some process of substitution or be merely temporary': Wallis and Bruce, 'Secularization: the orthodox model', p. 25. The second model is met with the reply that such activities do not count as supernatural religion. For the argument that high rates of church attendance are the result of denominational competition, see Rodney Stark and Laurence R. Iannaccone, 'A supply-side reinterpretation of the "secularization" of Europe', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 33 (1994), pp. 230–52; Rodney Stark, Roger Finke and Laurence R. Iannacconne, 'Pluralism and piety: England and Wales, 1851', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 34 (1995), pp. 431–44.

[10] Philip Hammond wrote of a conference on the subject in 1970 and its indebtedness to these founders: 'subsequent investigators showed little in the way of systematic elaboration or development . . . It was as if those founders had said it all; by early in the twentieth century the social scientific study of religion had received the model bequeathed by these giants but had not gone importantly beyond it . . . We were still in the grip of a model conceived fifty to a hundred years earlier': 'Introduction', in *The sacred in a secular age*, p. 2.

[11] Bruce, *God is dead*, p. 219 (italics in original).

[12] Hugh McLeod, 'Secular cities? Berlin, London and New York in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries', in Bruce, ed., *Religion and modernization*, pp. 59–89.

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without clear distinction, different things; for example: 'secularization as differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms, secularization as decline of religious beliefs and practices, and secularization as marginalization of religion to a privatized sphere'.[13] Sixth, the paradigm in its 'hard' form is inward-looking, offering an explanation of religious decline alone without seeking to relate it to parallel phenomena. So statistics for declining church attendance, baptisms, marriages, Sunday school membership, and religious education are ably marshalled, but only in exceptional studies compared against similarly declining figures, in similar time periods, for other associational activity: enrolment in, and participation in the activities of, political parties, trades unions, sports clubs, or cultural groups. Seventh, the paradigm is positivist and omits recent work by physicians, psychologists, and psychiatrists; but this may be relevant, if phenomena such as 'near death experiences' are evidence for the religiosity of the unchurched. Eighth, the paradigm is almost wholly supported by an evidential base of recent work by sociologists.[14] The research of few historians is cited or integrated, with the exception of those who profess a major indebtedness to the social sciences.[15]

Yet the paradigm is inescapably a historical one,[16] purporting to describe a fundamental change over time from an age of faith to an age of secular

[13] Casanova, *Public religions in the modern world*, p. 211. Casanova accepts the validity of the first of these three arguments as a 'general historical structural trend', a claim that is 'as old as the Enlightenment critique of religion in all its variants', and a trend that is 'irresistible'; 'Indeed, the main purpose of this study has been not so much to revise old theories of secularization as to examine the roles which religions and religious movements could still play in furthering processes of practical rationalization', pp. 212–13, 231.

[14] E.g. Bruce, *God is dead*, 'References', pp. 248–63, and, even more clearly in the index, pp. 264–9, notices the work of only a few historians, and of fewer still who dissent from the secularization paradigm.

[15] E.g. Alan Houston and Steve Pincus, 'Introduction. Modernity and later-seventeenth-century England', in Houston and Pincus, eds., *A nation transformed: England after the Restoration* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 1–19. Their central contentions about the late seventeenth century are 'the increasing differentiation of politics and religion', and that 'Religious life was increasingly identified with the reformation of manners. Faith, word and doctrine were supplanted by work, conduct and civility', pp. 13, 15. Their argument appeals for its authority on the validity of a notion of 'modernity' only to the work of 'social scientists', pp. 5–7; historians of the opposite opinion there cited include Tony Claydon, Lionel Glassey, John Morrill, John Pocock, Quentin Skinner and Jonathan Scott, pp. 4–5. Blair Worden, 'The question of secularization' (ibid. pp. 20–40, at 28) adds the names of Mark Goldie and Tim Harris as emphasizing 'the continuing centrality of religious issues in the political conduct and thought of the Restoration'.

[16] 'Essentially, what I have tried to do here is to push to the final sociological consequence an understanding of religion as a historical product': Peter L. Berger, *The social reality of religion* (London, 1969), p. vi. Charles Taylor explains that 'it is a crucial fact of our present spiritual predicament that it is historical'. Taylor also accepts, as a historical episode or process, the 'rise of modernity': 'The basic insight underlying the "orthodox" modes of theory in this domain is that "modernity" (in some sense) tends to repress or reduce "religion" (in some sense)': Taylor, *A secular age*, pp. 25–6, 28, 290, 429. 'Modernity' does not appear in the index, and is unchallenged in Taylor's text.

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indifference to religion (the reliance of the classical sociology of religion on idealized versions of twelfth- and nineteenth-century Western European religious practice is not in doubt, as was pointed out by David Martin).[17] This interpretive superstructure is still built on underlying and (by now) clichéd historical assumptions: 'Everything concurs in indicating (whether directly or indirectly and inductively) that religion undergoes a profound crisis in industrial society . . . Incipient secularity began in the urban area . . . Within industrial society' social changes 'bring about a decay in religiosity from a certain moment of history onwards'.[18] 'The rise of urban civilization and the collapse of traditional religion are the two main hallmarks of our era and are closely related movements.'[19] Again, 'Protestantism served as a historically decisive prelude to secularization . . . The original "locale" of secularization . . . was in the economic arena, specifically, in those sectors of the economy being formed by the capitalistic and industrial processes.' The roots of 'the dynamics' of these developments

> are in the processes of rationalization released by modernization (that is, by the establishment of, first, a capitalist, then an industrial socio-economic order . . . modernization is today a worldwide phenomenon and . . . the structures of modern industrial society, despite great modifications in different areas and national cultures, produce remarkably similar situations for the religious traditions and the institutions that embody these.[20]

Such causes are arranged chronologically: 'The Protestant Reformation', after producing the 'Protestant Ethic', led to 'Industrial Capitalism' and, in turn, 'Economic Growth'; 'Monotheism' in historical time produced 'Rationality' which begat 'Science', which begat 'Technology', which begat 'Technological consciousness'. This genealogy of secularization contends that

> People came to see the supernatural world as they saw the material world. Thus feudal agricultural societies tended to have a hierarchically structured religion where the great pyramid of pope, bishops, priests and laity reflected the social pyramid of king, nobles, gentry and peasants. Independent small farmers or the rising business class preferred a more democratic religion; hence their attraction to such early Protestant sects as the Presbyterians, Baptists and Quakers.[21]

[17] David Martin, *The religious and the secular: studies in secularization* (London, 1969), pp. 65–6. Bruce now protests that the secularization paradigm does not require an earlier 'Golden Age of Faith', only major change: *God is dead*, pp. 54–6. That major change has happened is accepted in the present article, but reinterpreted.

[18] S. S. Acquaviva, *The decline of the sacred in industrial society,* trans. Patricia Lipscomb (Oxford, 1979), pp. 84, 109, 159. For the essentially historical nature of this thesis, see esp. pp. 85–136. The author adds 'the class struggle' and 'science and technology' as contributing causes, pp. 106, 136, 140. Unusually, Acquaviva points to 'the period around 1100 as the time when Christian religiosity began to decline', thanks to a twelfth-century 'industrial transformation': ibid., pp. 100–4. Most sociologists place such developments in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

[19] Harvey Cox, *The secular city: secularization and urbanization in theological perspective* (New York, NY, 1965), p. 1.

[20] Berger, *Social reality of religion*, pp. 113, 128, 130–1, 170.

[21] Bruce, *God is dead*, p. 9.

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'The Protestant Reformation', equally, sired a historically datable phenomenon, 'Individualism'. 'The Reformation' produced 'mass literacy' which in turn led to 'the general emphasis on the importance and rights of the individual and the growth of egalitarianism and liberal democracy'.[22] All these are historical hypotheses, now of some age, but systematized and combined in the secularization paradigm.

Historians of the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries used often to share this confidence in the 'grand narrative' of secularization not least because its end point, a secularized present, seemed assured. Medieval society was seen as obviously theistic. Nineteenth- or at least twentieth-century urban society in 'the West' was unquestionably secular. Its world had been thoroughly disillusioned, as Max Weber had rightly contended.[23] It followed that the only thing for historians of the early modern period to do with secularization was to date it.[24] But historians now have a problem: in recent decades this secularized end point has been called in question[25] by scholars of nineteenth- and twentieth-century religion like Callum Brown, Jeffrey Cox, Robin Gill, Simon Green, Hugh McLeod, Jeremy Morris, James Obelkevitch, Mark Smith, Sarah Williams, and Stephen Yeo.[26] Such work entails significant rethinking for earlier centuries. As

[22] Ibid., p. 4, Figure 1.1, and p. 15. For more nuanced, but still historical, accounts see Bryan R. Wilson, *Religion in secular society: a sociological comment* (London, 1966), pp. 1–18; David Martin, *A general theory of secularization* (Oxford, 1978), offered a sophisticated account of secularization as something which 'occurs' by examining 'historical circumstances', pp. 4–5, 18–21; C. John Sommerville, *The secularization of early modern England: from religious culture to religious faith* (New York, NY, 1992); Hugh McLeod, *Secularisation in western Europe, 1848–1914* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 1–12. Sommerville still posits a great divide between a society in which religious attitudes were taken for granted and one in which they had been redefined as private opinion. Whether such a watershed between pre-modern and modern is now tenable is open to doubt.

[23] For an argument that Max Weber is not to be understood as a theorist of secularization, and an exploration of some historiographical consequences, see J. C. D. Clark, 'The re-enchantment of the world? Religion and monarchy in eighteenth-century Europe', in Michael Schaich, ed., *Monarchy and religion: the transformation of royal culture in eighteenth-century Europe* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 41–75.

[24] From a large literature, see Roy Porter, *English society in the eighteenth century* (Harmondsworth, 1982; 2nd edn, 1990); idem, *Enlightenment: Britain and the creation of the modern world* (London, 2000); Jonathan Israel, *Radical enlightenment: philosophy and the making of modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001).

[25] For an analysis of this scholarship see especially Jeremy Morris, 'The strange death of Christian Britain: another look at the secularization debate', *Historical Journal*, 46 (2003), pp. 963–76. This discussion takes Morris's overview as a starting point, and does not revisit the points made there. For an argument that secularization is 'a theological hypothesis' within 'arguments about the nature of religion', whatever the quantifiable features of social change, see Morris, 'Secularization and religious experience: arguments in the historiography of British religion', a companion to the present article in this issue of the *Historical Journal*.

[26] Callum Brown, *The social history of religion in Scotland since 1730* (London, 1987); idem, *The death of Christian Britain: understanding secularisation 1800–2000* (London, 2001; 2nd edn, 2009) contends that secularization is not a process extending over centuries, but that de-Christianization in Britain is a sudden and profound change since the 1960s. Previous research 'has resulted in showing that secularisation took place more slowly, marginally later, and less

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is now appreciated, working-class participation could be substantially higher than was once thought, including in cities, and spanned a wide range of understanding, engagement, and self-identification; nor was the 'empty church' a recent phenomenon. Hitherto-used figures for church 'membership' embodied the assumptions of the voluntary, 'gathered churches' of Protestant nonconformity; these figures fail to capture the looser or more intermittent engagement of Catholicism and Anglicanism. Such figures also echo the assumptions about formality and regularity of middle-class activists; again, they fail to capture the less structured, less organized lives of the great majority. Assumptions about Christian behaviour and piety similarly take as an implicit yardstick the degree of knowledge of Christian doctrine and devotional practice attainable by those with intelligence, education, and leisure; the yardstick is less appropriate for those majorities with fewer of those advantages, groups that had their own conceptions of Christianity. Correcting for such inbuilt biases suggests that the high levels of church provision, attendance, and participation in Britain in c. 1850–1914 were the exception, not the norm. A new appreciation of the extent of popular religiosity means that the arrival of 'secularization' in Britain has been steadily postponed, and finally problematized; historians retain the term, as they retain 'the Industrial Revolution', but with increasing qualifiers and embarrassment. Historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are now illuminating the religious themes in episodes or developments once thought to be essentially secular.[27] The contemporary world, too, has changed,

completely than the theory originally suggested. But it has left the theory still in place, if not intact … revisionism has left unmodified the core notion of religious decline as a prolonged, unilinear and inevitable consequence of modernity': ibid., p. 11; Jeffrey Cox, *The English churches in a secular society: Lambeth, 1870–1930* (New York, NY, 1982); Robin Gill, *Competing convictions* (London, 1989); idem, *The myth of the empty church* (London, 1993); revised edn as *The 'empty church' revisited* (Aldershot, 2003); S. J. D. Green, *Religion in the age of decline: organization and experience in industrial Yorkshire 1870–1920* (Cambridge, 1996); 'The chief theme of this study has been not the uniform impact of an 'industrial society' or the adoption of an 'urban way of life', but the division of a city into separate worlds, marked by radically different styles of life, and between which there was little communication': Hugh McLeod, *Class and religion in the late Victorian city* (London, 1974), p. 281; idem, *Secularisation in western Europe 1848–1914;* J. N. Morris, *Religion and urban change: Croydon, 1840–1914* (Woodbridge, 1992); James Obelkevitch, *Religion and rural society: South Lindsey, 1825–1875* (Oxford, 1976); Mark Smith, *Religion in industrial society: Oldham and Saddleworth 1740–1865* (Oxford, 1994); S. C. Williams, *Religious belief and popular culture in Southwark, c. 1880–1939* (Oxford, 1999); Stephen Yeo, *Religion and voluntary organisations in crisis* (London, 1976), a study of Reading, 1890–1914.

[27] A small sample would include, in high politics and imperialism: Jon Parry, *Democracy and religion: Gladstone and the Liberal party, 1867–1875* (Cambridge, 1986); Rowan Strong, *Anglicanism and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2007); Stewart J. Brown, *Providence and empire: religion, politics and society in the United Kingdom* (London, 2008); in international conflict: Dale Van Kley, *The religious origins of the French Revolution: from Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560–1791* (New Haven, CT, 1996); Nigel Aston, *Christianity in revolutionary Europe, 1750–1830* (Cambridge, 2002); James Bell, *The imperial origin of the king's church in early America, 1607–1783* (Basingstoke, 2004); idem, *A war of religion: dissenters, Anglicans and the American Revolution* (Basingstoke, 2008); Michael Burleigh, *Earthly powers: religion and politics in Europe from the*

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as was brilliantly sensed by Gilles Kepel in his book *La revanche de Dieu* in 1991;[28] American academic attention, even among sociologists formerly committed to the secularization paradigm, has turned to the growing salience of religion in world conflicts;[29] in 2007 the *Economist* retracted its obituary of God, published in 2000, and printed a special issue on the wars of religion then being fought around the world.[30]

Historians of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries have begun to reconsider their position fundamentally.[31] No longer is their implicit task to fill in the early sections of an overarching narrative of secularization, the full shape of which was to be more clearly seen in later centuries. Yet it is not the hardest task to argue that religion mattered in the age of the Reformation. In a later period, especially the long eighteenth century, the task is more difficult. Some scholars like Phyllis Mack and David Hempton have encouraged historians to rethink what religious experience meant for the rank and file.[32] Others like Tony Claydon and Steve Pincus have revealed the lasting importance of religious themes in the realms of politics and diplomacy, and argued about how one should diagnose and date the changes in those spheres.[33] But such work has not yet transformed the historiography of an era still often seen as the classic territory of modernization, secularization, urbanization, and industrialization, or at least the locus of the decisive shifts that permitted such 'processes' to achieve swift fulfilment thereafter. There is no general agreement on where

Enlightenment to the Great War (London, 2005); idem, *Sacred causes: religion and politics from the European dictators to Al Qaeda* (London, 2006).

[28] Gilles Kepel, *La revanche de dieu* (Paris, 1991).

[29] A 'whole body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labeled "secularization theory" is essentially mistaken . . . The world today is massively religious, is *anything but* the secularized world that had been predicted (whether joyfully or despondently) by so many analysts of modernity': Peter L. Berger, 'The desecularization of the world: a global overview', in Berger, ed., *The desecularization of the world: resurgent religion and world politics* (Washington, DC, 1999), pp. 1–18, at 2–3, 9.

[30] 'The new wars of religion', *Economist*, 385 (3–9 Nov. 2007).

[31] For a survey see Alexandra Walsham, 'The Reformation and the "disenchantment of the world" reassessed', *Historical Journal*, 51 (2008), pp. 497–528. The present article takes this overview of the Reformation period as a starting point, and does not revisit the points made there. Walsham is, however, primarily concerned with 'desacralization' rather than with 'secularization' (p. 504).

[32] Phyllis Mack, *Visionary women: ecstatic prophecy in seventeenth-century England* (Berkeley, CA, 1994); idem, *Heart religion in the British Enlightenment: gender and emotion in early Methodism* (Cambridge, 2008); David Hempton, *The religion of the people: Methodism and popular religion c. 1750–1900* (London, 1996); idem, *Methodism: empire of the spirit* (New Haven, CT, 2005).

[33] Tony Claydon, *Europe and the making of England 1660–1760* (Cambridge, 2007); Steve Pincus, *1688: the first modern revolution* (New Haven, CT, 2009). This work provides extensive evidence for the lasting importance of religious commitment; evidence at odds with the book's central argument.

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historians now stand,[34] and further exploration of the issue is suggested in this review.

II

It is argued here that the historical scenario underpinning the secularization paradigm, widely accepted half a century ago, has broken down in ways that call the paradigm in question. It is doubtful whether many historians would today endorse such broad categories or such elementary links between them as those advanced by Acquaviva and Bruce. It is even questionable whether sociology has authority in this field as distinct from its historical underpinning, although for reasons of space this theoretical question is not explored here. Rather, it is argued that the weak point in the secularization paradigm is not its statistical base (church attenders as a percentage of the population and church weddings as a percentage of all weddings, for example, did decline in the twentieth century) but the historical framework within which such data are set and their consequent historical interpretation. This review contends that, since the 1980s, a rapidly developing historiography, including but extending beyond the subject of religious belief and practice, has rendered the traditional sociological model untenable. With respect to the sociological genealogy of secularization just reviewed, this historiography establishes:

1. Urbanization did not produce secularization. In no simple sense was 'modern urban society . . . inimical to religion'. Rather, the major declines in church attendance in Britain came in the period after the First World War, by which time migration to industrial centres had often halted and a reverse pattern of migration to suburbs and commuter belts begun. Before c. 1914, the most marked feature of many British cities was denominational rivalry, not religious disengagement. Until after 1918, urbanization was generally associated with higher, not lower, per capita church attendances. Far from industrialization and urbanization producing secularization, the late Victorian period was 'arguably the point in British history when religion attained its greatest social significance'.[35] Indeed, perhaps 'urbanization and industrialization can *cause* church growth'.[36]

[34] 'Despite the achievements of the sceptics, their collective achievement is smaller than the sum of its parts. There is no new "turn" in modern British religious history, only a collection of dissenting monographs'; sceptics have shown 'the impotence of the empirical rebuttal' to a 'master narrative' of secularization that 'remains largely uncontested': Jeffrey Cox, 'Provincializing Christendom: the case of Great Britain', *Church History*, 75 (2006), pp. 120–30, at 125, 127.

[35] Callum G. Brown, 'Did urbanization secularize Britain?', *Urban History Yearbook, 1988* (London, 1988), pp. 1–14, at 1, 11. Brown offers a critique of Alan Gilbert, *Religion and society in industrial England: church, chapel and social change, 1740–1914* (London, 1976): 'Gilbert's interpretation hinges on the sociological concept of "modernization"', p. 5.

[36] Callum G. Brown, 'A revisionist approach to religious change', in Bruce, ed., *Religion and modernization*, pp. 31–58, at 48.

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2. There was no unitary 'Protestant Reformation' in the sixteenth century to generate a unitary 'Protestant ethic'.[37] Rather, many diverse reforming initiatives were taken, often identified as Protestant or Catholic only by historical contingency. A weakness of the denominationally-based historiography which seeks to depict a singular and uniquely Protestant Reformation is its failure to include many major initiatives which took place *within* the Catholic Church, including Conciliarism and the movements of the Waldenses, Albigensians or Cathars, Lollards, Hussites, and Jansenists.[38] Even historians not addressing these phenomena now discuss a 'long Reformation'[39] and point to the importance of successive waves of evangelical theology that broke before, during, and after industrialization.[40]

3. Protestantism was not a necessary or sufficient condition of 'capitalism', even if this last reification still has historical meaning. The component parts and practices of what was later termed 'capitalism' long preceded the Reformation and were not exclusive to areas later Protestant.[41] England was not the 'cradle of capitalism', as Max Weber allegedly believed, but a latecomer in economic development. The first leading medieval centres of international finance were not London or Geneva, but Catholic cities like Florence, Lucca, and Siena, then

[37] 'The history of the Reformation as a European phenomenon has ... oscillated between seeing it as a matter of local variants on a central theme, and emphasizing the peculiarities and distinctiveness of local traditions'; from a survey of 1994 'no comprehensive synthesis seems to emerge': Bob Scribner, in Scribner, Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich, eds., *The Reformation in national context* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 2–3; Heinz Schilling, 'The second Reformation: problems and issues', in Schilling, *Religion, political culture and the emergence of early modern society* (Leiden, 1992), pp. 247–301.

[38] For the latter, in the period of this review, see Leszek Kolakowski, *God owes us nothing: a brief remark on Pascal's religion and on the spirit of Jansenism* (Chicago, IL, 1995); William Doyle, *Jansenism: Catholic resistance to authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution* (London, 2000); Dale Van Kley, 'Jansenism and the international suppression of the Jesuits', in Stewart J. Brown and Timothy Tackett, eds., *The Cambridge history of Christianity*, VII: *Enlightenment, reawakening and revolution, 1660–1815* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 302–28.

[39] Louis Chatellier, *The Europe of the devout: the Catholic Reformation and the foundation of a new society*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge, 1989); Nicholas Tyacke, ed., *England's long Reformation, 1500–1800* (London, 1998); Peter G. Wallace, *The long European Reformation: religion, political conflict, and the search for conformity, 1350–1750* (Basingstoke, 2004); Jeffrey R. Watt, ed., *The long Reformation* (Boston, MA, 2006). Despite its qualifications, even A. G. Dickens and John M. Tonkin, *The Reformation in historical thought* (Cambridge, MA, 1985) treated 'the Reformation' almost wholly as a sixteenth-century and as a Protestant episode.

[40] W. R. Ward, *The Protestant evangelical awakening* (Cambridge, 1992); idem, *Early evangelicalism: a global intellectual history, 1670–1789* (Cambridge, 2006).

[41] Robert S. Lopez, *The commercial revolution of the middle ages, 950–1350* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 1976); Jean Favier, *Gold & spices: the rise of commerce in the middle ages* (1987; trans. Caroline Higgitt, New York, NY, 1998); Peter Spufford, *Power and profit: the merchant in medieval Europe* (London, 2002) (for the 'commercial revolution' of the thirteenth century, pp. 12–59); Steven A. Epstein, *An economic and social history of later medieval Europe, 1000–1500* (Cambridge, 2009). The significance of these changes for the secularization paradigm remains, even if they are not to be interpreted as a 'transition to capitalism'; for the latter thesis see Martha C. Howell, *Commerce before capitalism in Europe, 1300–1600* (Cambridge, 2010).

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Bruges and Antwerp;[42] the first dominant European foci of international commerce were not London but Catholic ports like Pisa, Genoa, Venice, and pre-Reformation Lübeck;[43] the weaving of woollen cloth became a dominant industry first in Catholic towns like Arras, Bruges, and Ghent,[44] not Bradford. Double-entry book-keeping originated in Genoa or Florence; bills of exchange had been developed in Italy by the late thirteenth century, and commercial insurance soon after;[45] Catholic Venice passed the first patent law in Europe in 1447, and published the first book setting out the principles of accounting in 1494;[46] the largest manufacturing establishment in pre-Reformation Europe and first significant example of assembly-line production from standardized parts was not in Birmingham but again in Venice's naval dockyard, the Arsenale; the centre of the European cotton trade by the late eighteenth century was not Glasgow or Manchester, but Catholic Barcelona.[47]

For many centuries, concentrations of manufacturing, commerce, and finance migrated around Europe, as they now do around the world, but not blown by any 'Protestant Wind'.[48] Even in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain, the once-celebrated strong correlation between Protestant dissent and entrepreneurship in finance and manufacture has been shown to be largely inaccurate.[49] Nor was the influence of theology on trade uni-directional.

[42] Herman van der Wee, *The growth of the Antwerp market and the European economy* (*fourteenth–sixteenth centuries*) (3 vols., The Hague, 1963); Franco Cardini et al., *Banchieri e mercanti di Siena* (Rome, 1987); Edwin S. Hunt, *The medieval super-companies: a study of the Peruzzi Company of Florence* (Cambridge, 1994); Patrick O'Brien et al., eds., *Urban achievement in early modern Europe: golden ages in Antwerp, Amsterdam and London* (Cambridge, 2001); Peter Spufford, *From Antwerp to London: the decline of financial centres in Europe* (Ortelius lecture, Wassenaar: Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, 2005).

[43] Philippe Dollinger, *The German Hanse* (London, 1970); Frederic C. Lane, *Venice: a maritime republic* (Baltimore, MD, 1973); Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Merchants in crisis: Genoese and Venetian men of affairs and the fourteenth-century depression* (New Haven, CT, 1976); Heinz Stoob, *Die Hanse* (Graz, 1995); Steven Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese, 958–1528* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1996); Jean Claude Hocquet, *Denaro, navi e mercati a Venezia, 1200–1600* (Rome, 1999); Marco Tangheroni, *Politica, commercio, agricoltura a Pisa nel trecento* (Pisa, 2002); Thomas Allison Kirk, *Genoa and the sea: policy and power in an early modern maritime republic, 1559–1684* (Baltimore, MD, 2005); Wilhelm Koppe, *Die Lübecker Frankfurt händler des 14 jahrhunderts* (Lübeck, 2006).

[44] Jean Lestocquoy, *La vie sociale et economique à Arras du XIIe au XVe siècle* (Arras, 1941); David Nicholas, *The metamorphosis of a medieval city: Ghent in the age of the Arteveldes, 1302–1390* (Lincoln, NE, 1987); James M. Murray, *Bruges, cradle of capitalism, 1280–1390* (Cambridge, 2005).

[45] Spufford, *Power and profit*, pp. 29, 32, 34.

[46] Epstein, *An economic and social history of later medieval Europe*, pp. 213, 271–4.

[47] J. K. J. Thomson, *A distinctive industrialization: cotton in Barcelona, 1728–1832* (Cambridge, 1992).

[48] One now sees that questions like 'why did capitalism emerge and triumph in a part of western Europe in the early modern period? Why this area, and particularly why in England?' (Alan Macfarlane, *The culture of capitalism* (Oxford, 1987), p. 178) are *questions mal posées*.

[49] See especially W. D. Rubinstein, *Men of property: the very wealthy in Britain since the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1981; 2nd edn, 2006); idem, *Wealth and inequality in Britain* (London, 1986); idem, *Elites and the wealthy in modern British history* (Brighton, 1987). Earlier sociologists of religion were obliged to draw on a much older historiography (e.g. E. P. Thompson, Eric

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The economy of Scotland was anything but dynamic at the time of Calvinism's greatest flourishing there from the 1560s;[50] three centuries later, Scotland's heavy industries boomed, partly manned by Irish Catholic immigrants. It might even be argued that the Calvinist doctrine of predestination provided a disincentive to worldly striving, and that its 'this-worldly asceticism' acted as an economic dampener in the two centuries after the Reformation; by contrast, luxury expenditure and monastic economic organization may have been fiscal stimuli in the expansive four centuries before the Black Death. Even if 'Protestantism' and 'Catholicism' were two homogeneous economic actors, which may be doubted, their economic consequences in their undisturbed forms are hard to compare in a Europe large parts of which were devastated by the military conflicts that religious reformation unleashed.[51]

4. That monotheism (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) alone produced rationality is a hypothesis that can be made to seem plausible only by omitting the key contrary example, China.[52] Even if monotheism produced rationality in Christendom, it did so long before 'modernization'; 'science' in the twentieth-century sense was later still. 'Technology' was often a set of craft skills that long preceded academic 'science', as therefore did 'technological consciousness'. And if monotheism produced rationality, it did so, among other eras, during the age of medieval Catholicism: the 'secularization thesis' is an aspect of normative nineteenth-century anti-Catholic polemic more than a scholarly hypothesis without polemical applications in its own day.[53]

5. The argument that people's vision of the supernatural world mirrored their vision of a hierarchy of wealth and power in this world embodies an a priori reductionism. Medieval Catholicism was a varied and diverse formation in which the papacy's power waxed and waned, finally coming close to eclipse in the early sixteenth century; 'feudalism', too, is a theoretical construct stretched to cover very diverse social relations. By the eighteenth century, many great

Hobsbawm) of an 'Industrial Revolution' and its supposed social constituencies, e.g. David Martin, *A sociology of English religion* (London, 1967), pp. 16–17.

[50] For an attempt to vindicate Max Weber see especially Gordon Marshall, *Presbyteries and profits: Calvinism and the development of capitalism in Scotland, 1560–1707* (Oxford, 1980), a work which is, however, over-optimistic about the extent of Scotland's industrial activity in the seventeenth century and frames no comparison with economic activity in non-Calvinist societies. On Weber, see also Patrick Collinson, 'Religion, society and the historian', *Journal of Religious History*, 23 (1999), pp. 149–67, at 163–4.

[51] Denis Crouzet, *Les guerriers de dieu: la violence au temps des troubles de religion, vers 1525 – vers 1610* (2 vols., Seyssel, 1990); James M. Stayer, *The German peasants' war and the Anabaptist community of goods* (Montreal, 1991); Peter H. Wilson, *Europe's tragedy: a history of the Thirty Years War* (London, 2009).

[52] Joseph Needham et al., *Science and civilization in China* (27 vols. to date, Cambridge, 1954–2008).

[53] 'The Christian Church of the Middle Ages was firmly authoritarian and exclusive in its attitude to knowledge. There was a single truth and it knew what it was': Bruce, *God is dead*, p. 29. No evidence is adduced to support this parody.

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conurbations and manufacturing towns were located in Protestant Europe, but many in Catholic Europe also.

6. Individualism did not wait for Protestantism, but can be traced in human conduct for centuries in Catholic Europe.[54] Equally, some Protestant denominations, however much emphasis they placed on individual conversion, could expect 'new births' to take very similar forms. Protestant sects could be highly coercive and communitarian – generally more so than antecedent religious arrangements.

7. If the Reformation promoted widespread literacy in vernacular languages, by far the larger part of publications in the vernacular still expressed a similar culture rather than a newly emancipated and therefore secular one. In England, the Term Catalogues suggest that of new titles published and registered, the percentage falling into the category 'Divinity' actually rose from 29·5 to 48·8 between 1668–9 and 1705–9.[55] Most titles were not registered, but studies of all published titles yield broadly similar results. Edith Klotz's research suggested that 32·6 per cent of titles published in 1500 fell into the category 'Religious', compared with 43·5 per cent in 1640: there was no long-term decline in that period.[56] Michael Suarez assigns 34 per cent of titles published or republished in 1703 to the category 'Religion, philosophy and ethics', the largest category; although declining to 16 per cent by 1793, this fall is explained by the general printing boom, bringing greater growth in numbers of titles in other categories: the absolute number of religious titles still rose from 573 in 1703 to 815 in 1793, after a mid-century fall.[57] As to the Reformation

[54] Colin M. Morris, *The discovery of the individual, 1050–1200* (London, 1972); Alan Macfarlane, *The origins of English individualism: the family, property and social transition* (Oxford, 1978); idem, *On individualism* (Lancaster, 1994); for reservations on the use of law as evidence for practice see Stephen D. White and Richard T. Vann, 'The invention of English individualism: Alan Macfarlane and the modernization of pre-industrial England', *Social History*, 8 (1983), pp. 345–63; L. R. Poos and Lloyd Bonfield, 'Law and individualism in medieval England', *Social History*, 11 (1986), pp. 287–301.

[55] John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie, eds., *The Cambridge history of the book in Britain*, IV: *1557–1695* (Cambridge, 2002), table 4, p. 788. These figures are problematic rather because of the way in which (as is pointed out for the antecedent period) 'the commodity which we might want to distinguish as "religion" permeated much, if not all, of what is now secularized': Patrick Collinson, Arnold Hunt, and Alexandra Walsham, 'Religious publishing in England 1557–1640', in ibid., pp. 29–66, at 29. It is difficult to reconcile this data with older ideas about 'the retreat of theology' in the later seventeenth century, as in Blair Worden, 'The question of secularization', in Houston and Pincus, eds., *A nation transformed*, p. 38.

[56] Edith L. Klotz, 'A subject analysis of English imprints for every tenth year from 1480 to 1640', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 1 (1938), pp. 417–19; Sommerville, *The secularization of early modern England*, pp. 92–3.

[57] Michael F. Suarez, SJ, 'Towards a bibliometric analysis of the surviving record, 1701–1800', in Michael F. Suarez, SJ, and Michael L. Turner, eds., *The Cambridge history of the book in Britain*, V: *1695–1830* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 39–65, at pp. 46–7. John Price (ibid., p. 807) points out that the present-day distinction between 'religion' and 'philosophy' is anachronistic for the eighteenth century.

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producing 'liberal democracy', this last is a term that betrays ignorance of the historical origins of two initially unrelated phenomena, liberalism and democracy.[58]

In sum, it is now extremely difficult to argue that there was a fundamental divide between 'pre-modern' and 'modern' of a kind which might validate a claim that 'modernity' is essentially secular in a way that a preceding era was not.[59]

III

The 'secularization paradigm' was constructed at a particular time and place. Appropriately, it has been held to fit 'the liberal industrial democracies of the Western world' in the present and to describe the challenges posed to religion by 'modernization', a phenomenon supposed to characterize 'the West'.[60] The category 'modernization' became problematic as its components came under scrutiny: the nature of liberalism, the timing and significance of industrialization, the validity of the notion of 'the West',[61] the profound differences between the United States and the societies of continental Europe. Centrally, sociologists, philosophers, and others who still make use of the idea of secularization treat it as integral to the notion of modernization.[62] Indeed, standard dictionaries of ideas largely define secularization in terms of modernization, and modernization in terms of secularization. This produces an argument that is strong until its circularity is realized. Yet 'modernization', as is now appreciated, is itself an historical construct. Before that became clear, in writing on the period addressed here modernization was reified and held synonymous with 'the industrialization of work; the shift from villages to towns and cities; the replacement of the small community by society; the rise of individualism; the rise of egalitarianism; and the rationalization both of thought and of social organization'. 'Close-knit, integrated, communities gradually lost power and presence to large-scale industrial and commercial enterprises, to modern states coordinated through massive, impersonal bureaucracies, and

[58] For the origin of liberalism see J. C. D. Clark, *English society, 1660–1832: religion, ideology and politics during the ancien regime* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 6–8; for the theological origins of universal suffrage, ibid., pp. 382–4, 396–7.

[59] Bruce, *God is dead*, pp. 229–32, abandons a transition from the modern to the post-modern without appreciating the consequence: the weakness of any putative transition from the pre-modern to the modern. For the absence of this earlier transition, at least in England, see also Alan Macfarlane, *The culture of capitalism* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 144–69. Macfarlane (p. 169) identified the recent desire to see fundamental transitions everywhere as 'Revolutionism', and called for its study; perhaps the secularization paradigm is a prime instance of this convention.

[60] Bruce, *God is dead*, pp. xii, 2.

[61] J. C. D. Clark, 'Is there still a West? The trajectory of a category', *Orbis*, 48 (2004), pp. 577–91.

[62] See especially the social scientists' works cited in Pincus, *1688: the first modern revolution*.

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to cities. This is the classic community-to-society transition delineated by Ferdinand Tönnies (1955).' Again, 'The fragmentation of the religious tradition that resulted from the Reformation hastened the development of the religiously neutral state.'[63] Modernization is traditionally located (especially within the British Isles) as beginning alternatively in the late seventeenth century (Laslett) or the late eighteenth (Hobsbawm) but similarly conceived, and extending into the twentieth.

In a range of specialist fields, however, historians have produced results that are inconsistent with this model:

1. Labour had long pursued specialization of economic function: this did not wait for the Reformation, but preceded it and continued irrespective of religious innovation. Heads of households had long sought to specialize, for economic reasons: urbanization from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries produced increasing occupational definition. Thornbury, Gloucestershire, saw by-names for thirty-five non-agricultural activities, even before craft names became hereditary surnames (in Britain, before 1400; elsewhere earlier): bakers, brewers, butchers, carpenters, carters, coopers, fishers, fletchers, gardeners, joiners, masons, millers, porters, potters, shearers, shepherds, smiths, tailors, tanners, thatchers, tilers, turners, weavers, wrights, and others, including even clerks. The proliferation of such occupations did not wait for emancipation from any religious constraints.[64]

2. Population growth initially occurred both in the countryside and in the towns, so that urban life, although in some ways different, was not seen before the nineteenth century as signalling an ontological divide (and even then only by certain theorists). John Wesley (1703–91), whose journals record in detail a career of unwearying itinerancy in countryside, town, and growing manufacturing areas from the 1740s to his death, perceived no essential discontinuity bearing on the religious experience and development of individuals.[65]

3. Even the great urban conurbations were collections of small communities, so that it is not clear that even the nineteenth century saw a replacement of small-scale communities by 'society'. Additionally, a widely shared idea of the polity was very ancient in the British Isles, and promoted a sense of collective identity

[63] Bruce, *God is dead*, pp. 2, 13–14.

[64] Gustav Fransson, *Middle English surnames of occupation, 1100–1350* (Lund, 1935); P. H. Reaney, *The origin of English surnames* (London, 1967); Carl Gersuny, 'Occupations, occupational surnames and the development of society', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 8 (1974), pp. 99–106; Richard H. Britnell, 'England: towns, trade and industry', in S. H. Rigby, ed., *A companion to Britain in the later middle ages* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 50–3. I owe this last reference to John Gillingham.

[65] J. C. D. Clark, 'The eighteenth-century context', in William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby, eds., *The Oxford handbook of Methodist studies* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 3–29, at 5.

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at least back to the Anglo-Saxons: this, too, did not wait for 'modernization'.[66] The ascription of the date 1955 to Tönnies's notion records an English translation, and conceals the fact that his work positing a transition between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* was first published as long ago as 1887; it now calls for revision.

4. Individualism (as has been seen) has been dated to a much earlier period and may even be pushed back to the origin of individual burials (in present-day England, from the bronze age, c. 2500 BC): it can no longer be chronologically linked to 'modernization'. Nor, if individualism is a present-day reality, can it be adduced as a cause of secularization, since individual emancipation may only encourage people to explore a variety of 'new age' religions rather than more familiar denominations.

5. Egalitarianism was a religious principle for many centuries before it became a secular political one: the idea that 'all men are created equal' has real leverage only when the emphasis is placed on the word 'created', and that term is construed literally. Nor did industrialization necessarily promote egalitarianism: the twentieth-century money economy permitted extraordinary disparities of wealth, and even more of life-styles, where people in medieval societies were often tied to a rough equality by the primitive nature of available goods. Even if occupational mobility promoted individualism, the pre-industrial countryside in the British Isles was a place of churning economic and demographic change, rarely of immemorial stasis.[67]

6. The 'rationalization of thought' is hard to explain, unless it means emancipation from religious belief; in which case the argument becomes circular. It might mean the rejection of Catholicism as superstition, in which case it identifies the polemical origin of the secularization paradigm. Or it might mean the extension of intellectuals' doubts about Christian revelation into a broad social movement essentially built on the rejection of Christianity, now know as the Enlightenment; but here the historiography of recent decades has overset Peter Gay's secular model of the Enlightenment, propagated by him in the 1960s, and re-inscribed religion at the centre of that phenomenon.[68]

[66] J. C. D. Clark, 'Protestantism, nationalism and national identity, 1660–1832', *Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), pp. 249–76.

[67] R. H. Britnell, *Britain and Ireland, 1050–1530: economy and society* (Oxford, 2004), esp. chs. 4, 14, 24; P. J. P. Goldberg, *Medieval England: a social history, 1250–1550* (London, 2004); Robin Fleming, *Britain after Rome: the fall and rise, 400–1070* (London, 2010). I owe these references to John Gillingham.

[68] From a large literature see especially Jonathan Sheehan, 'Enlightenment, religion, and the enigma of secularization: a review essay', *American Historical Review*, 108 (2003), pp. 1061–80; Dale Van Kley, 'Christianity as casualty and chrysalis of modernity: the problem of dechristianization in the French Revolution', ibid., pp. 1081–1104.

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7. The meaning of 'the rationalization ... of social organization' is similarly unclear; the smaller role of the state in earlier economies may only have meant a greater freedom for individuals rationally to maximize their utility. The idea that present-day bureaucracies act in rational ways is drawn from a priori assumption (or from the idealization of state bureaucracies in the German-speaking world, where much modernization theory originated) rather than from observation of their self-interest, corruption, or incompetence. The reassignment of administrative and charitable activities (in education, health, crime) from churches to civil agencies was 'very much a product of the victory of Dissent', seeking to break perceived monopolies of the established church, not of the decline of religious commitment as such. The same period that saw the growth of a local government bureaucracy also saw the growth of many denominational initiatives against prostitution, drink, and gambling.[69] A differentiation of function has undoubtedly occurred in the last two centuries, with the state taking over many religious functions hitherto discharged by churches and religious orders, but it is not clear why this would promote the decline of religious belief or practice as such.

8. The posited transition between religious uniformity produced by top-down imposition in late-medieval Catholicism, and diversity as the result of individual choice in Reformation Protestantism, greatly overstates, and perhaps reverses, these characteristics on each side of the alleged binary divide. Late medieval Catholicism was diverse in respect of faith and practice, and generally lacked the centralized authority that Protestantism itself was to provoke.[70] At the same time, historians have become increasingly aware of the principled reasons for seeking to impose religious uniformity in past societies,[71] reasons closely related to the reasons given for the imposition of secular values in present-day societies. England witnessed a new phenomenon from the 1660s, in the development of congregations of nonconformists separated from the established church, a reality given a degree of recognition in the Toleration Act of 1689; but this growth of denominations can be interpreted as evidence of religious zeal rather than of a novel pluralism or relativism from which religious indifference sprang.

[69] Brown, 'A revisionist approach to religious change', pp. 52–3.

[70] For the decline of medieval Conciliarism, the rival ecclesiology to Tridentine papalism, see Brian Tierney, *Foundations of the conciliar theory: the contribution of the medieval canonists from Gratian to the Great Schism* (Cambridge, 1955); Antony Black, *Monarchy and community: political ideas in the later Conciliar Controversy 1430–1450* (Cambridge, 1970); Francis Oakley, *The Conciliarist tradition: constitutionalism in the Catholic Church, 1300–1870* (Oxford, 2003).

[71] Mark Goldie, 'The theory of religious intolerance in Restoration England', in Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel, and Nicholas Tyacke, eds., *From persecution to toleration: the Glorious Revolution and religion in England* (Oxford, 1991); Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable hatred: tolerance and intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester, 2006).

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9. The religiously neutral state, formerly dated to the late seventeenth century, can no longer be located in that age: in Britain, hegemonic official ideology pictured the state as built on religious premises throughout the long eighteenth century and residually into the twentieth. Such an ideology (as in Sir William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the laws of England*) was presented as derived from a revealed religion which was conceived as doctrinal truth, not opinion. In England, legal disabilities on non-Anglicans were powerful until 1829 and are residual even today.[72] In North America, the 'civic religion' of the United States made the 'separation of church and state' a mantra in the twentieth century; this obscured the historical origins of that polity as a land created by Protestant dissent in a war of religion,[73] a fact whose present-day consequences are correctly appreciated by militant Islam.

Historians, then, can deal with the concept of modernization by dating its formulation and tracing how it was used. Certainly, the concept was wholly absent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. True, their inhabitants debated 'ancients' and 'moderns', but this was a way of debating the relative achievements of Rome and their then-present-day Europe; the idea was not reified as 'modernity' or extrapolated as a process, 'modernization'. Only those historians who depend on ahistorical social sciences for their categories can now suppose that there simply is such a thing as modernity, the task of historians being merely to date its arrival or explain the different shapes that it takes.

For polemical reasons, 'modernization' and 'secularization' became largely synonymous. Like the first, the second has been held by sociologists to be 'naturally occurring'.[74] It has, however, been described more by its putative effects than by its alleged nature:

> Secularization relates to the diminution in the social significance of religion. Its application covers such things as, the sequestration by political powers of the property and facilities of religious agencies; the shift from religious to secular control of various of the erstwhile activities and functions of religion; the decline in the proportion of their time, energy and resources which men devote to super-empirical concerns; the decay of religious institutions; the supplanting, in matters of behaviour, of religious precepts by demands that accord with strictly technical criteria; and the gradual replacement of a specifically religious consciousness (which might range from dependence on charms, rites, spells or prayers, to a broadly spiritually-inspired ethical concern) by an empirical, rational, instrumental orientation; the abandonment of mythical, poetic, and artistic interpretations of nature and society in favour of matter-of-fact description and, with it, the rigorous separation of evaluative and emotive dispositions from cognitive and positivistic orientations.[75]

[72] For the way in which these phenomena contradict modernization theory, see especially Clark, *English society, 1660–1832*, passim.

[73] J. C. D. Clark, *The language of liberty, 1660–1832: political discourse and social dynamics in the Anglo-American world* (Cambridge, 1994).

[74] Bruce, *God is dead*, p. xii.

[75] Wilson, *Religion in sociological perspective*, p. 149.

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Such a characterization combines historical hypotheses with philosophic categories; it depends on the sustainability of such philosophical terms as 'empirical', 'rational', and 'positivistic', and, here again, developments in the natural sciences like quantum physics call in question these survivals from the nineteenth century.[76] As to the historic base:

1. The diminution in the social significance of religion may be traced in some periods, only for new forms of social significance to emerge in subsequent periods. William Pitt (1759–1806) and Charles James Fox (1749–1806) may have been indifferent to religion, but a re-Christianized politics emerged with the anti-slavery campaigns of William Wilberforce (1759–1833), the social reforms of Anthony Ashley Cooper, 7th earl of Shaftesbury (1801–85), and the overtly denominational priorities of William Ewart Gladstone (1809–98).

2. In England, the sequestration of religious property can be dated to the dissolution of the monasteries in the early sixteenth century,[77] a world away from the 'modernization' of the nineteenth or declines in church attendance in the twentieth.

3. Similarly, the shifting balance of power between church and state has been played out in every century since the first Christian missions to Britain from Iona and Rome; it is not unique to any recent century.

4. The decline in time and resources devoted to supra-empirical concerns might be matched by the decline in the percentage of time and resources devoted to any one secular concern, with increasing wealth and increasing diversity of consumption and occupation: cooking, housekeeping, and child-rearing similarly occupy smaller fractions of the time of present-day Britons.

5. The decay of religious institutions has been a perennial complaint, although the disposal of (for example) many churches and monasteries in recent decades is undeniable.

6. The supplanting of religious precepts by technical criteria attends to, but does not accurately capture, real changes. It is not clear, for example, how present-day practices involving drugs, drink, and violence exemplify the internalization of 'technical criteria'. For some intellectuals, the eighteenth century may have witnessed a series of 'Enlightenment-era reactions to the

[76] It is clear that the term 'rational' in such discussions signifies some substantive end approved of by the author, not the effectiveness of a means to any end, e.g. Bruce, *God is dead*, pp. 32 ('impose rationality'), 43 ('non-rational sentiments').

[77] David Knowles, *The religious orders in England, III: The Tudor age* (Cambridge, 1959); Joan Greatrex, 'After Knowles: recent perspectives in monastic history', in James G. Clark (ed.), *The religious orders in pre-Reformation England* (Woodbridge, 2002); G. W. Bernard, *The king's reformation: Henry VIII and the remaking of the English church* (New Haven, CT, 2005).

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inaccessibility of a radically transcendent, hidden God'.[78] But for far larger numbers, their experience was putatively that of being 'born again' by direct contact with the divine. This experience tended to take a similar form for both the educated elite, influenced most by Anglican evangelicalism, and for those larger numbers influenced most by Methodism.[79]

7. The rise of a rational consciousness may be in doubt if the rise of psychoanalysis in the twentieth century is evidence of a persisting willingness to invoke metaphysical concepts to analyse the mind. Far from the Reformation promoting rationality, it might be argued that it long promoted (bigoted? irrational?) conflict between different denominations, including among different groups of Protestants and freethinkers.

IV

An effect of such packagings of meanings into the single category of 'secularization' is to obscure a distinction which is central to the historical analysis of the subject, namely the distinction between religiosity and religious practice. 'Religiosity' is here used to denote the people's disposition to respond to intuitions that they have, over time, termed religious. Religious behaviour embraces the forms of action undertaken in response to those intuitions. So distinguished, religiosity may be analysed like other human attributes such as height and strength: such characteristics tend to be distributed on a bell curve. A bell curve records, for statisticians, a 'normal distribution' of a phenomenon; and the argument here advanced suggests that this model may be extended from quantifiable to non-quantifiable characteristics. The latter would include musicality, people's responsiveness to music. So one might say that J. S. Bach was at one end of the curve, the tone deaf at the other, and the majority of mankind in the middle. Expressions of musicality change over time: in recent decades, listening to recorded music has grown and the playing of musical instruments has declined; but undoubted changes in musical behaviour are highly problematic if advanced as evidence that underlying musicality has

[78] Charly Coleman, 'Resacralizing the world: the fate of secularization in Enlightenment historiography', *Journal of Modern History*, 82 (2010), pp. 368–95, at 391.

[79] Richard Carwardine, *Trans-atlantic revivalism: popular evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790–1865* (Westport, CT, 1978); Boyd Hilton, *The age of atonement: the influence of evangelicalism on social and economic thought, 1795–1865* (Oxford, 1988); David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain: a history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989); Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk, eds., *Evangelicalism: comparative studies in popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and beyond, 1700–1900* (Oxford, 1994); D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical tradition between the conversions of Wesley and Wilberforce* (Oxford, 1996); Grayson Ditchfield, *The evangelical revival* (London, 1998); Alan Harding, *The countess of Huntingdon's connexion* (Oxford, 2003); Thomas R. Albin, 'Experience of God', in Abraham and Kirby, eds., *The Oxford handbook of Methodist studies*, pp. 379–97.

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changed – that is, that the position of the bell curve has moved with respect to the *x* and *y* axes.[80]

If so, a bell curve can also be used to represent the distribution of human religiosity, that is, of human responsiveness or receptiveness to what people in various and changing ways have characterized as God, or the gods, or the supernatural (sociologists have laboured unsuccessfully to define 'religion'; historians merely respond to the meanings employed by the people they study). At one end of the curve are people who claim that they have direct experience of God. At the other end are people who claim that they have no religious experience whatsoever. In between are the great majority. Over time, the expressions of their religiosity clearly change. A smaller proportion of people in Britain now attend the services of the long-established religious denominations. Those denominations supply a smaller proportion of provision in health care and education than they once did. But this is not proof that religiosity has shared in these 'declines'. Indeed, the distribution of religiosity across a spectrum may be relatively constant over time.[81] Religious practice also changes in contradictory directions: a host of 'new age' religions has sprung up to rival the declining Presbyterians or Methodists. Television evangelists reach millions. And religion is one of the two largest subjects represented on the internet.

Scholars' views on this matter may partly reflect their personal positions on the bell curve. Some assure us that secularization in their period was in full flood; others claim that their people in the past were sensible, moderate, and pragmatic in their beliefs; others again claim that the age they write about was an age of faith. But incorporating all their research makes problematic the assumption that the shape of the curve, or its position with respect to the *x* and *y* axes, changes over time. It also undermines the idea that a single sociological model ties together over time the diversity of individual experience.

It appears to be an important assumption of the sociological debate, shared on each side, that church attendance is evidence for the truth of Christianity, while non-attendance is evidence for its untruth. Historians need accept neither premise. They may, however, observe that repeated predictions of imminent or eventual secularization in western societies have never been fulfilled,[82] just as the Millennium has yet to arrive. What historians record is that at different periods, individuals at different points on the bell curve seize public attention and announce that the world is as they see it. At one moment, a Martin Luther or a John Knox steps forward to demand that other people conform their religious experience to the prophet's norms. At another time, a Richard

[80] 'In any era . . . when religion, at least as commonly understood, is receding, vitality of the sacred may thus come as a surprise. The present era would seem to fit such a description': Philip Hammond, in *The sacred in a secular age*, p. 5.

[81] Evidence for the constant distribution of belief and disbelief in God among American scientists between 1914 and 1996 is reviewed by Rodney Stark, 'Secularization, R.I.P.', in William H. Swatos, Jr. and Daniel V. A. Olson, eds., *The secularization debate* (Lanham, MD, 2000), pp. 41–66, at 57–8.

[82] Stark, 'Secularization, R.I.P.', pp. 41–5.

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Dawkins or a Christopher Hitchens, at an opposite point on the curve, steps forward to insist that the world is everywhere as it appears to him.

Religious practice changed greatly in the twentieth century, as it has changed in every century, and these changes are historically important; it is highly problematic to argue from that evidence to an underlying change in religiosity. But some sociologists do just that. They can write of secularization as 'a gradual, uneven, at times an oscillating, trend, the general direction of which is none the less unmistakable, in *the nature of human consciousness*, towards what might be called a "matter-of-fact" orientation to the world'.[83] They sometimes notice the possibility of a disjuncture between 'religious sentiment' and 'the form in which it has been expressed' (a way of putting it that implicitly downgrades 'sentiment'), but only to dismiss such a notion;[84] 'Whilst some form of religious commitment appears to be widespread, it seems doubtful that there is a dimension of religiosity which varies independently of the degree of attachment to traditional beliefs.'[85] Steve Bruce justifies that dismissal with the argument that other forms of religion are on offer, if old forms fail to meet 'demand'. Perhaps this indicates rather that analysing religious belief and practice in terms of 'supply' and 'demand' is less than appropriate: such analysis does not discuss the nature of the 'religion' that is supposedly demanded or supplied.

Bruce adds that opinion polls also show a decline in Christian belief; but such professions of disbelief to pollsters might be strongly related to people's disengagement from denominational Christian practice rather than evidence for a decline in religiosity itself, especially since surveys have showed that 'non-traditional' religious beliefs remained stable. One poll in 2000 suggested that Britons acknowledging a spiritual realm of some sort outnumbered its deniers by 70 per cent to 15 per cent of total respondents.[86] Bruce offers appropriate scepticism on the reliability of survey results in which respondents identify the degree of their religiosity, but no congruent scepticism towards such surveys' reliability on affirmations of agnosticism or atheism. Indeed, he describes the figures in one poll in 2000 for people declaring themselves agnostics or atheists, together 18 per cent of all respondents, as 'far higher than anything we would have got a century ago, had such polls been conducted then', a claim that, by its own admission, cannot rest on historical evidence. Bruce concludes: 'Whether there is some essential human need to raise spiritual questions is too broad a question to be answered here'; but he does in fact dismiss arguments that religiosity is constant and that change has been 'limited to organizational structures and shared rituals' as 'unsociological', that is, not explicable by 'our

[83] Bryan Wilson, *Contemporary transformations of religion* (London, 1976), p. 11 (italics added).
[84] Bruce, *God is dead*, pp. 71–3, 104, 186.
[85] Kenneth Thompson, 'How religious are the British?', in Terence Thomas, ed., *The British: their religious beliefs and practices, 1800–1986* (London, 1988), pp. 211–39, at 229.
[86] Bruce, *God is dead*, pp. 138, citing Robin Gill, C. Kirk Hadaway, and Penny Long Marler, 'Is religious belief declining in Britain?', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 37 (1998), pp. 507–16, and 'Soul of Britain' survey, Opinion Research Survey 2000.

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biological condition'; 'some scholars invent considerable latent religiosity'.[87] Such arguments may be, if unsociological, at least historical.

An opposite interpretation has been proposed, stressing the persistence of religious belief coinciding with decreasing formal religious practice.[88] If, moreover, religiosity is to some degree independent of religious practice, it becomes much more difficult to posit secularization as a process, whether inevitable or merely irreversible. Indeed, many denominations have recently experienced both declines in churchgoing and growth in involvement in other forms of religiously inspired activity.[89]

Within the secularization paradigm, however, religious behaviour and religiosity have generally been equated: 'within the religious experience where there is such a close co-ordination between experience of the sacred and religious behaviour, there is generally no behaviour without experience or experience without behaviour'.[90] Sociologists who have sensed the distinction have typically reacted by denying its importance: in their work

> there is a very clear implication that three things are causally related: the social importance of religion, the number of people who take it seriously, and how seriously anyone takes it . . . the declining social significance of religion causes a decline in the number of religious people and the extent to which people are religious . . . changes in religious belief and behaviour are best explained by changes in social structure and culture that make religion more or less plausible and more or less desirable.[91]

However, it is suggested here that this reductionist step in the argument is both a non-sequitur and unsupported by historical evidence.

V

Secularization, then, is widely pictured as a 'process', normally within the framework of stadial theory: 'the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols'.[92] But the historian is entitled to ask whether there are such things as processes.

[87] Bruce, *God is dead*, pp. 72, 186–203, 104–5, 186. Bruce contends that much work on 'receptivity to religion' (here called religiosity) is 'methodologically inadequate' (ibid., p. 186); perhaps that is because it is insufficiently historical.

[88] Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: believing without belonging* (Oxford, 1994).

[89] Michael P. Hornsby-Smith, 'Recent transformations in English Catholicism: evidence of secularization?', in Bruce, ed., *Religion and modernization*, pp. 118–44, at 121–3, 133, 135, 137, 139–40.

[90] Acquaviva, *Decline of the sacred in industrial society*, p. 153.

[91] Bruce, *God is dead*, pp. 3–4.

[92] Berger, *Social reality of religion*, p. 107. Bruce disavows any claim of inevitability: 'We are claiming irreversibility, rather than inevitability': *God is dead*, p. 38. But a process need not be an inevitable process; and the question is whether it is a process at all. For one of few recent historians to claim secularization as a 'process' that was 'monumental' and 'will not go away' in historiography, see Worden, 'The question of secularization', pp. 20, 24. Yet Worden offers no defence of the idea of process, instead arguing historically that 'the theological disputes of the

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Perhaps the cast of historical characters consists only of individuals and their actions. If so, a 'process' is an invention of the social sciences, at best a metaphor imported from the natural sciences to human affairs that then becomes reified, so that all historians need do with it is to date it more accurately. And historians who still take their cues from the social sciences generally think they have gained a great point if they date secularization to an earlier period than their colleagues had appreciated.

The long eighteenth century, c. 1660–1832, is the central territory on which the steady or sudden unfolding of secularization is held to be demonstrated. According to Marcel Gauchet, 'Somewhere around 1700, the deepest ever fracture in history occurred'; 'roughly around 1700 . . . specifically Christian history comes to a halt'.[93] But here, above all, recent historiography has pointed in the opposite direction. Some sociologists have resisted this research; they have allowed that there may have been 'occasions, or even epochs, of "resacralization"', but countered that 'It would be difficult to demonstrate that any such reversals have ever occurred.'[94] If secularization is an irreversible and naturally occurring process, then such reversals could only be temporary aberrations. It is, however, legitimate for historians to weigh the evidence.

One historical response to this sociological scenario is to argue that recent decades are more religious than the notion of a great divide requires. A second is to record that many people in past centuries often showed a disregard of religious obligations or little evidence of faith until a 'devotional revolution' often datable to the nineteenth century. As Keith Thomas urged in 1971, 'We do not know enough about the religious beliefs and practices of our remote ancestors to be certain of the extent to which religious faith and practice have actually declined. Not enough justice has been done to the volume of apathy, heterodoxy and agnosticism which existed long before the onset of industrialism.' In the same year, Jean Delumeau wrote: 'As I see it, the "Christian Middle Ages", as far as the (essentially rural) masses are concerned, is a legend which is being increasingly challenged. And if it is legend, the two Reformations – Luther's and Rome's – constituted, despite mutual excommunication, two complementary aspects of one and the same process of Christianization.'[95] This argument would offer support to the idea

interregnum had discredited religion' by the late seventeenth century, p. 39. Again, a longer time horizon makes this historical scenario problematic.

[93] Marcel Gauchet, *The disenchantment of the world: a political history of religion* (Paris, 1985; trans. Oscar Burge, Princeton, NJ, 1997), p. 162.

[94] Wilson, 'Secularization: the inherited model', p. 17.

[95] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic: studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England* (London, 1971), pp. 151–73, at 173; Jean Delumeau, *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire: a new view of the Counter-Reformation* (Paris, 1971; trans. Jeremy Moiser, London, 1977), foreword, n.p., and pp. 154–74; Gabriel Le Bras, 'Déchristianisation: mot fallacieux', *Social Compass*, 10 (1963), pp. 445–52; Alexander Murray, 'Piety and impiety in 13th century Italy', in G.J. Cuming and D. Baker, eds., *Popular belief and practice* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 83–106; Emmet Larkin, 'The devotional revolution in Ireland, 1850–75', *American*

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of a constant religiosity, but it is not essential to it. Religious behaviour may change in much the ways that the secularization paradigm describes, yet religiosity may remain constant. The first argument, that the general incidence of religious practice has been understated for later periods, carries more weight: for example, much flows from the recent demonstration that popular religion in the long eighteenth century was more powerful than had been posited in earlier work that had given a special significance to industrialization and urbanization.[96] One still finds asides about 'eighteenth-century inertia' in historical writing on other periods,[97] but they are now rare.

Historical Review, 77 (1972), pp. 625–52; R. Martin Goodridge, '"The ages of faith" – romance or reality?', *Sociological Review*, 23 (1975), pp. 381–96; Robert Muchembled, *Culture populaire et culture des élites dans la France moderne (XVI–XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris, 1978); William Monter, *Ritual, myth and magic in early modern Europe* (Brighton, 1983); Rosalind and Christopher Brooke, *Popular religion in the middle ages: western Europe, 1000–1300* (London, 1984); John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400–1700* (Oxford, 1985); Judith Devlin, *The superstitious mind: French peasants and the supernatural in the nineteenth century* (New Haven, CT, 1987); Ellen Badone, ed., *Religious orthodoxy and popular faith in European society* (Princeton, NJ, 1990); Nigel Aston and Matthew Cragoe, eds., *Anticlericalism in Britain, c. 1500–1914* (Stroud, 2000). For low rates of church attendance even in colonial New England, subsequent growth, and the success of denominations preaching 'vivid otherworldliness', see Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, 'American religion in 1776: a statistical portrait', *Sociological Analysis*, 49 (1988), pp. 39–51; Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The churching of America, 1776–2005: winners and losers in our religious economy* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1992; 2nd edn, 2005), pp. xiv, 1 and passim; in contrast, 'as denominations have modernized their doctrines and embraced temporal values, they have gone into decline', p. 9. The partial and sometimes superficial coverage of the medieval church in Western Europe has recently been obscured by the success of Eamon Duffy, *The stripping of the altars: traditional religion in England, c. 1400 – c. 1580* (New Haven, CT, 1992), for this work has been widely read as presenting a wealth of evidence for the vitality of pre-Reformation popular religious practice without needing to engage with countervailing evidence for, or scholarship on, the church's limitations. The reception of Duffy's book may therefore be compared with that of another emotionally appealing vision of society before a great watershed: Peter Laslett, *The world we have lost* (London, 1965). For a sociologist echoing Laslett's title see Wilson, *Religion in sociological perspective*, p. 179 and, for an explicit reference, Wilson, *Religion in secular society*, p. ix. For a philosopher drawing on Duffy to validate the idea of an 'enchanted world of 500 years ago' before a great divide see Taylor, *A secular age*, pp. 34–40, 64.

[96] Diana McClatchey, *Oxfordshire clergy, 1777–1869: a study of the established church and of the role of its clergy in local society* (Oxford, 1960); James Downey, *The eighteenth century pulpit* (Oxford, 1969); Arthur Warne, *Church and society in eighteenth-century Devon* (Newton Abbot, 1969); C. John Sommerville, *Popular religion in Restoration England* (Gainesville, FA, 1977); Viviane Barrie-Curien, *Clergé et pastorale en Angleterre au XVIIIè siècle: le diocèse de Londres* (Paris, 1992); John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor, eds., *The Church of England c. 1689 – c. 1833: from toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge, 1993); William Gibson, *The achievement of the Anglican church, 1689–1800: the confessional state in eighteenth-century England* (Lewiston, 1995); W. M. Jacob, *Lay people and religion in the early eighteenth century* (Cambridge, 1996); Donald A. Spaeth, *The church in an age of danger: parsons and parishioners, 1660–1740* (Cambridge, 2000); Jeremy Gregory, *Restoration, reformation and reform, 1660–1828: archbishops of Canterbury and their diocese* (Oxford, 2000); William Gibson, *The church of England, 1688–1832: unity and accord* (London, 2001).

[97] E.g. Worden, in Houston and Pincus, eds., *A nation transformed*, p. 22. It may be that much of this image of eighteenth-century religious torpor is an extrapolation by civil war scholars of the contrast between the 1640s and 1660s; that after the Restoration 'the great age of

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What historians securely report is evidence for a strengthening ideology demanding the separation of church and state, religion and political life. But such a separation, in the British Isles, occurred much later than was once thought: not in 1660, or 1688, and not indeed importantly until into the nineteenth century, after the conventionally-identified processes of 'modernization' were thought to have become powerful. Nor was the separation of church and state 'one consequence of diversity'[98] but, rather, one outcome of political conflict not predetermined by the existence of rival religious groups.[99]

Historians must deal with the alleged instantiations of their categories. Some wish to claim that secularization is demonstrated in the lives and writings of individuals, from libertines like Charles II through James Boswell to Charles James Fox. Others treat as exemplary philosophers like John Locke, David Hume, and Jeremy Bentham. Others point to certain key transformative events or episodes, like the Restoration, the Revolution of 1688, the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution. Others again rely on concepts, especially modernization, as validating secularization.

As in other matters, British history reveals an array of contrary instances. Against Restoration licence stand the works of Milton and Bunyan, and the writings of the Caroline divines. John Locke has been misinterpreted if presented as a philosopher seeking to demote faith to opinion,[100] for he argued both that God's existence was 'the most obvious Truth that Reason discovers', and that the evidence for God's existence was '(if I mistake not) equal to mathematical Certainty'.[101] To balance the deists historians set the writings of Bishop Berkeley, and the piety of the high churchmen[102] and nonjurors. Even the English Catholic community and the universities, once sharing historiographical disparagement, have been rehabilitated.[103] David Hume's contemporaries included John Wesley and George Whitefield; they reached far

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theological controversy was past', p. 38. As historians now appreciate, in the next two centuries Britain rang with theological controversy.

[98] Bruce, *God is dead*, p. 17. [99] Clark, *English society, 1660–1832*, pp. 501–64.

[100] Worden, 'The question of secularization', p. 31. Worden repeatedly cites as his authority Gordon Cragg, *From puritanism to the age of reason* (Cambridge, 1966). But this work is actually of rather greater vintage, being a reprint of the 1950 edition; much has changed in the historiography of eighteenth-century religion since that date.

[101] [John Locke], *An enquiry concerning humane understanding* (London: Tho. Basset for Edward Mory, 1690), bk IV, ch. x, s. 1, p. 312.

[102] F. C. Mather, *High church prophet: Bishop Samuel Horsley (1733–1806) and the Caroline tradition in the later Georgian church* (Oxford, 1992); E. A. Varley, *The last of the prince bishops: William Van Mildert and the high church movement of the early nineteenth century* (Cambridge, 1992). For high churchmanship as the matrix of the Oxford Movement see especially Peter Benedict Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in context: Anglican high churchmanship, 1760–1857* (Cambridge, 1994).

[103] Gabriel Glickman, *The English Catholic community 1688–1745: politics, culture and ideology* (Woodbridge, 2009); John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the age of the Enlightenment: science, religion and politics from the Restoration to the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1989); Oxford has been less well served.

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more people. Indeed, Hume's contemporaries and immediate successors widely believed that he had lost the argument over miracles,[104] and if debate shifted away from miracles in the late eighteenth century it may only have turned instead to a renewed emphasis on providence.[105] One balances Jeremy Bentham, a convert to atheism,[106] and the utilitarians against the evangelical movement that was so dominant in the early nineteenth century. The great conurbations of the late nineteenth century, seemingly proofs of the power of being to determine consciousness, coincided with the greatest pastoral reach of the Oxford Movement.[107] Within Christianity, one might debate whether men heterodox with respect to the Trinity, from John Toland and Matthew Tindal to Thomas Paine, should be understood as atheists or as reformers working towards a purified faith.[108] Indeed, the once-widespread idea that a powerful and secularizing deist movement was a prime agent of modernity has been declared a 'myth',[109] and religious change is increasingly traced to sources within the church.[110] The American Revolution, far from producing a secular society, was followed by successive waves of Protestant evangelicalism.

Historians do not conflate secularization with laicization, the growing involvement of the laity in religion, whether as organizers of denominations and of worship, or as authors, musicians, and artists. Nor do they think of religion only as an element of continuity and stability. Late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century heterodoxy fed into Liberalism, the vehicle for the political prominence of Protestant nonconformity that reached its high tide with the Liberal electoral victory in 1906; the distinct waves of Christian Socialism in the nineteenth century, more than a secular Marxism, fuelled the rise of the Labour party, culminating in and after 1945.

It has been argued that the existence of a state church in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries alienated many of the population because of its association with 'the ruling class': 'the close association between the clergy

[104] James Fieser, ed., *Early responses to Hume* (Bristol, 1999; 2nd edn, 10 vols., 2005); the analytical reasons for their responses are explored in J. Houston, *Reported miracles: a critique of Hume* (Cambridge, 1994); John Earman, *Hume's abject failure: the argument against miracles* (New York, NY, 2000).

[105] J. C. D. Clark, 'Providence, predestination and progress: or, did the Enlightenment fail?', *Albion*, 35 (2003), pp. 559–89.

[106] J. C. D. Clark, 'Religion and the origins of radicalism in nineteenth-century Britain', in Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein, eds., *English radicalism, 1550–1850* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 241–84, at 254–65.

[107] A survey of the movement's pastoral role is lacking, but for its theoretical stance see S. A. Skinner, *Tractarians and the 'condition of England': the social and political thought of the Oxford Movement* (Oxford, 2004), ch. 6, 'The church and the poor'.

[108] John Toland, *Nazarenus*, ed. Justin Champion (Oxford, 1999); Justin Champion, *Republican learning: John Toland and the crisis of Christian culture, 1696–1722* (Manchester, 2003).

[109] S. J. Barnett, *The Enlightenment and religion: the myths of modernity* (Manchester, 2003).

[110] E.g. William Gibson, *Enlightenment prelate: Benjamin Hoadly, 1676–1761* (Cambridge, 2004); Robert G. Ingram, *Religion, reform and modernity in the eighteenth century: Thomas Secker and the Church of England* (Woodbridge, 2007).

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and the ruling class caused large sections of the laity to attach their dislike of their rulers to the clergy they controlled and then generalize it into a dislike of religion as such'.[111] Alexis de Tocqueville wrote similarly about the new United States: a multiplicity of competing but not established denominations raised the level of piety. Yet such an argument may fit at some times and in some places, but not generally. In England's case, the existence of an established church was long associated with high levels of identification with it and attendance at its services. Protestant and Catholic dissenters might form only a small fraction of the population; in the case of Protestant dissent, its numbers evidently fell markedly in the century c. 1660–1760. If they rose in the century that followed, the Church of England was no more established than it had been before. That church's association with the state might be at some times (as during the French Revolution) a source of strength,[112] at other times (as after 1918 and 1945) of weakness.[113]

Sociologists have often emphasized a class basis to religious commitment and political mobilization. 'It would be unwise to suppose that most chose sides in the English civil war on religious preferences (or even that many chose as distinct from simply being enlisted by their masters), but there was an obvious social basis to allegiances.' Eighteenth-century Methodism, too, is held to have been determined by the class location of its adherents. 'Within any one region, the more radical Protestant ideas appealed most to the most advanced sections of the subordinate social classes in large part because they reinforced and legitimated the claims to autonomy and independence that such social and economic changes had awakened in those groups.'[114] Yet most historians have recently taken an opposite view: in their work, religious affiliation has emerged as the key correlate of allegiance in the 1640s, while early Methodism is less and less explicable in terms of class.[115] Class itself emerges as an anti-religious

[111] 'We have plenty of evidence that the eighteenth-century Church of England was stuffed with placemen and that toadying to the gentry who controlled the lucrative livings and to the senior church officials who controlled cathedral posts was common'; nineteenth-century denunciations of eighteenth-century 'Unbelieving bishops and a slothful clergy' were 'widely applicable': Bruce, *God is dead*, pp. 153–4. Historians have now recovered much evidence for the pastoral effectiveness of the eighteenth-century church and for local spiritual vitality: e.g. Judith Jago, *Aspects of the Georgian church: visitation studies of the diocese of York, 1761–1776* (Cranbury, NJ, 1997); Jeremy Gregory and Jeffrey S. Chamberlain, eds., *The national church in local perspective: the Church of England and the regions, 1660–1800* (Woodbridge, 2003).

[112] R. A. Soloway, *Prelates and people: ecclesiastical social thought in England, 1783–1852* (London, 1969); Ian R. Christie, *Stress and stability in late eighteenth-century Britain: reflections on the British avoidance of revolution* (Oxford, 1984).

[113] Alan Wilkinson, *The Church of England and the First World War* (London, 1978), pp. 262–310; Edward Norman, *Church and society in England, 1770–1970: a historical study* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 364–474.

[114] Bruce, *God is dead*, pp. 159–60, 164.

[115] J. S. Morrill, 'The religious context of the English civil war', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 34 (1984), pp. 89–114; Clark, 'The eighteenth-century context'.

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ideology from the 1830s, not as a proof of widening secularity in response to industrialization from the 1780s.[116]

This argument suggests that secularization is always happening, but never completed. Historians might say that religion is always declining in much the same sense as the middle class is always rising; and this locution captures the clichéd character of both scenarios. In all ages some people's religious vision weakens, or their religious practice is discontinued. At the same time, other people's becomes more intense, and their practice more engaged. 'Revivalists' often lamented that theirs was an age of growing religious indifference, but at the same time they were rekindling enthusiasm. The religious sectarianism of the 1640s faded, but a century and a half later the religiously based politics of Richard Price, Joseph Priestley, and Thomas Paine suggest that no ontological divide had been crossed. If talk of hell and sin declined in the late seventeenth century,[117] such talk rose again in the late eighteenth and was prominent in the nineteenth.[118] If resistance theory was distanced from practice after 1660 and 1688, it was squarely back on the agenda in 1776 and again in our own day in the case of Islam. If the generation after 1660 wished wars of religion to be a thing of the past,[119] Hew Strachan judges the First World War to have been ultimately a war of religion.[120] Historians who fix on some one episode in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries as a turning point that proves a subsequent long-term trend too often show little comparative sense of what came before or after. Expressions of religiosity are always changing, but in their familiar and their novel forms are all around us in later and later decades. It might be concluded that historians have no competence to pronounce that religiosity itself changes over time. They can record that at certain times a particular discourse becomes hegemonic in some societies in which religious belief and religiously based action are asserted to be illusory. But these hegemonies are often succeeded by their opposites.

One school of historians traces the decline of religious practice in England primarily to endogenous causes. Some among them stress the clergy's (primarily the Anglican clergy's) defeats in a series of debates and conflicts that they might have won.[121] Others cite functional failings, especially problems of associational practice. In this view, there was no 'sea change in

[116] Clark, *English society, 1660–1832*, pp. 164–200.

[117] D. P. Walker, *The decline of hell: seventeenth-century discussions of eternal torment* (London, 1964); Philip C. Almond, *Heaven and hell in Enlightenment England* (Cambridge, 1994).

[118] One feature of the new American republic was the extraordinary attention of its preachers to the doctrine of the Atonement; but this has yet to find its historian.

[119] J. C. D. Clark, 'The strange persistence of wars of religion, 1638–2009', in idem, *The writing on the wall* (forthcoming).

[120] Hew Strachan, *The First World War, I, to arms* (Oxford, 2001), p. 1115.

[121] Edward Norman, *Church and society in England, 1770–1970* and *Secularisation* (London, 2002), esp. pp. 119–26 for a perception of internal failure; Maurice Cowling, *Religion and public doctrine in modern England* (3 vols., Cambridge, 1980–2001). For a sociological analogy, see Martin, *The religious and the secular*.

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popular urban religion' (in the sense of this essay, religiosity) in the early twentieth century; the decline of the churches after the First World War was 'the product as much of an internal deficiency within modern religious organizations as of the external pressures which had been brought to bear on them during the past fifty years and more', so that, by the mid twentieth century, people 'stopped believing because they stopped going' to church, not vice versa.[122]

If so, it follows that secularization is not a process, but a project;[123] not something happening autonomously within the phenomena, like ocean currents or hurricanes, but a project urged by some individuals who seek historical validation for a cause.[124] In this sense the secularist and the evangelist are mirror images of each other, and atheism, articulated in a sociological scenario as secularization, is an act of faith as much as is theism. To this debate historians have a wider perspective to contribute as the social sciences (following R. G. Collingwood's prediction) collapse into history. Yet in the substantial absence of that contribution to date, arguments between theists and atheists have reached a stage of renewed intensity.[125]

VI

However the phenomena of churchgoing or non-churchgoing might plausibly be explained in particular times and places by reference to political or economic circumstance, the persistence of religiosity across many cultures over

[122] Green, *Religion in the age of decline*, pp. 387–8, 390. Norman, *Secularisation*, p. ix, attributes the decline of the Church of England to 'lost habit' rather than to the impact of 'hostile ideology'.

[123] 'What makes the European situation unique and exceptional when compared with the rest of the world is precisely the triumph of secularism as a teleological theory of religious development': José Casanova, 'Beyond European and American exceptionalisms: towards a global perspective', in Grace Davie, Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, eds., *Predicting religion: Christian, secular and alternative futures* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 17–29, at 24. For one aspect of this see David Bebbington, 'The secularization of British universities since the mid-nineteenth century', in George M. Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield, eds., *The secularization of the academy* (New York, NY, 1992), pp. 259–77.

[124] J. M. Robertson, *A history of freethought in the nineteenth century* (2 vols., London, 1929); Richard H. Popkin, *The history of scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (Assen, 1960); Edward Royle, *Victorian infidels: the origins of the British secularist movement, 1791–1866* (Manchester, 1974); idem, *The infidel tradition: Paine to Bradlaugh* (London, 1976); idem, *Radicals, secularists and republicans: popular freethought in Britain, 1866–1915* (Manchester, 1980); Susan Budd, *Varieties of unbelief: atheists and agnostics in English society, 1850–1960* (London, 1977). Within the historiography of political thought, see Paul A. Marshall, 'Quentin Skinner and the secularization of political thought', *Studies in Political Thought*, 2 (1993), pp. 85–104. For one episode in France, see Michel Vovelle, *Religion et révolution: la déchristianisation de l'an II* (Paris, 1976).

[125] From a large literature, see especially Keith Ward, *God, chance and necessity* (Oxford, 1996); Alister E. McGrath, *The twilight of atheism: the rise and fall of disbelief in the modern world* (London, 2004); Richard M. Dawkins, *The God delusion* (London, 2006); Christopher Hitchens, *God is not great: the case against religion* (London, 2007).

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many centuries gives weight to the idea of the importance of human religiosity as against its changing expressions.[126] The persistence of religious behaviour in Britain over much shorter time frames, but periods crucial to the component parts of the scenario of secularization, also suggests that that scenario in its sociological form has significant problems. In Britain, a sharp downturn in church attendance and in the perceived authority of Christianity seems now to have taken place mainly from 'the long 1960s'. It is debatable how far one very recent phase of the history of the 'secularization paradigm' within the sociology of religion implicitly generalizes these post-1960s phenomena, only now being researched,[127] to stand for experience across many centuries in importantly differing societies.

If so, then to historicize the secularization paradigm has important consequences. This exercise reveals secularization not as a process but as a project, and a project still pursued, sometimes with an evangelical zeal, by its apostles. But if secularization is not a process, historians can deal with the idea that 'it' is not a thing, instantiated over time, but a variety of phenomena grouped under one label. That is, the idea of 'secularization' can be turned from the key which will open all locks into an important component of the history of ideas that can itself be explained historically.

It is not the purpose of this article to refute 'the secularization paradigm' but to begin to locate it historically, and to appreciate what it achieves and what it fails to achieve in the light of recent historical research. All such enquiry has its limitations. If the very terms 'sacred' and 'secular' embody a value judgement, and if there is no agreed definition of what constitutes 'religion', it follows that sociological discussion of the subject can only be inconclusive. Certainly, it cannot validate the analysis, or the predictions, of 'the secularization paradigm' independently of historical evidence.[128]

[126] For the tensions within classic secularization theory subsequently caused by the inclusion in the analysis of historical evidence for other societies from around the world, see Ira Katznelson and Gareth Stedman Jones, eds., *Religion and the political imagination* (Cambridge, 2010).

[127] Arthur Marwick, *The sixties: cultural revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c. 1958–1974* (Oxford, 1998); Hugh McLeod, *The religious crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford, 2007); Brown, *The death of Christian Britain* (2009); and Callum G. Brown, 'What was the religious crisis of the 1960s?', *Journal of Religious History*, 34 (2010), pp. 468–79. The emerging divide in scholarship is between explanations internal to the churches, notably reforming theology (McLeod) and explanations external to them, notably circumambient social change (Brown).

[128] Some students acknowledge 'a basic incompatibility between religiously-based reasoning and "experiencing", for instance, in the scientific world. Is the incompatibility intrinsic and irremediable, or is it historical and, for that reason, contingent?': Acquaviva, *Decline of the sacred in industrial society*, p. 163. Green, *Religion in the age of decline*, p. 381, concludes that 'no theory, for or against secularization, is consistent with all, or even most, of the evidence'. Bruce offers a definition of religion: 'Religion for us consists of actions, beliefs and institutions predicated upon the assumption of the existence of either supernatural entities with powers of agency, or impersonal powers or processes possessed of moral purpose, which have the capacity to set the conditions of, or to intervene in, human affairs': 'Secularization: the orthodox model',

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The challenge for historians is to explain the lasting affirmations of theists and atheists alike. The methodological problems in that enterprise suggest that the decisive division among students of this subject is less between 'pessimists' (emphasizing the scale of the decline in religious practice) and 'optimists' (stressing its long survival) than between reductionists and non-reductionists. The reductionists (it has been argued) are still embarked in a project that precludes understanding of the phenomenon it appears to address and only replaces confessional history with its opposite, 'secular confessional history'.[129] In 1994, one believer in the secularization paradigm concluded a history of religion in Britain with a forecast that any alternative to progressive secularization was unimaginable except via a 'cataclysm'; the 'kind of demodernization which would radically reverse *the process* of secularization might prove catastrophic for civilization as a whole'.[130] Today, it is difficult to see such comments as other than normative; but the persisting strength of the paradigm is manifest.[131] One historian has confessed: 'As someone who has spent over twenty-five years researching aspects of eighteenth-century religion, what strikes me is what little impact those of us working on religious themes have actually had on the ways in which the eighteenth century is conceptualized and studied.'[132] It may be that the still-ghettoized subject of 'ecclesiastical history' has failed to address the growing problems of secularization theory and failed to deliver on its potential to integrate both theism and atheism in a larger vision, perhaps in an alternative master narrative.[133]

Nevertheless, the landscape changes. The 'secularization paradigm' was challenged in the 1960s by Martin and countered with key empirical evidence

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pp. 10–11. The word 'assumption' seems to rule out the possibility of the validity of human experience. By contrast, historians have no authority to exclude evidence for either theism or atheism a priori.

[129] Brad S. Gregory, 'The other confessional history: on secular bias in the study of religion', *History and Theory*, 45 (2006), pp. 132–49, illustrates the premises of metaphysical naturalism present in Durkheim's work.

[130] Alan D. Gilbert, 'Secularization and the future', in Sheridan Gilley and W. J. Sheils, eds., *A history of religion in Britain: practice and belief from pre-Roman times to the present* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 503–21, at 520 (italics added).

[131] For recent reassertions of the long-term validity of the secularization paradigm and of the related concept of modernization see, for example, Pippa Norris and Robert Inglehart, *Sacred and secular: religion and politics worldwide* (Cambridge, 2004); Steve Bruce and Tony Glendinning, 'When was secularization? Dating the decline of the British churches and locating its cause', *British Journal of Sociology*, 61 (2010), pp. 107–26.

[132] Jeremy Gregory, 'Introduction: transforming "the age of reason" into "an age of faiths": or, putting religions and beliefs (back) into the eighteenth century', *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, 32 (2009), pp. 287–305, at 293.

[133] Whether postmodernist critiques have been more effective is a matter for debate; see Mark Edward Ruff, 'The postmodern challenge to the secularization thesis: a critical assessment', *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte*, 99 (2005), pp. 385–401. Ruff suggests that the abandonment of the master narrative of secularization will only lead to the creation of a new master narrative, 'one likely based on the so-called "feminization" narrative, the fruits of gender history' (p. 398).

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in the 1980s by Cox and Brown; from that decade, historical research has accumulated which raises increasing difficulties. The largest problem with the secularization scenario is an omission. One of the largest social changes in the last half century in Europe – mass immigration – may have been pictured by sociologists primarily as ethnic diversification (welcome) rather than as religious challenge (unwelcome). The sociology of religion was therefore unprepared to deal with this new issue, and held to old certainties. The secularization paradigm would be less persuasive if argued on the territory of international Islam; but this difficulty has implications for the realms of Christianity and Judaism also.

Rather than being the key to the history of religion, it is the history of the secularization paradigm that now needs to be written;[134] that history will reveal a composite notion, built up over time from diverse and partly inconsistent components, a notion put to a changing series of uses. The Islamic terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States and 7 July 2005 in the United Kingdom are no simple refutations of the secularization paradigm, but encourage doubts about whether that paradigm leads people to the point at which they believe they now stand.[135] Increasingly, Western Europe, with lower levels of religious practice than other areas of the world, may be the odd man out.[136] Yet even historical research on European religion suggests that a stage has been reached at which a radical reconstruction of a hitherto-hegemonic explanatory framework is necessary. Such a reconstruction would have to be open to the possibility not of decline but of transformation: 'a shift from theism to pantheism, from outer to inner authority, from God to self-as-god, and above all from religion to spirituality'.[137] It might be asked whether David Martin's

[134] For a preliminary attempt, from the standpoint of the sociology of religion in and relating to the United States, see William H. Swatos, Jr, and Kevin J. Christiano, 'Secularization theory: the course of a concept', in Swatos and Olson, eds., *The secularization debate*, pp. 1–20. The authors do not engage with the historical scholarship reviewed here.

[135] John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *God is back: how the global revival of faith is changing the world* (New York, NY, 2009). The analysis of this work is, however, made problematic by its normative endorsement of the category 'modernization'. For similar appreciations of changing understandings see Paul Marshall, Lela Gilbert, and Roberta Green Ahmanson, eds., *Blind spot: when journalists don't get religion* (New York, NY, 2009), esp. Timothy Samuel Shah and Monica Duffy Toft, 'God is winning: religion in global politics', pp. 11–28; Steven D. Smith, *The disenchantment of secular discourse* (Cambridge, MA, 2010).

[136] Even then, 'Might it not be the case that Europeans are not so much *less* religious than citizens in other parts of the world as *differently* religious?': Grace Davie, 'Europe: the exception that proves the rule?', in Berger, ed., *The desecularization of the world*, pp. 65–83, at 65. Davie argues that 'Western Europeans are *unchurched* populations, rather than simply secular', p. 68. Cf. Grace Davie, *Religion in modern Europe: a memory mutates* (Oxford, 2000).

[137] Davie, Heelas, and Woodhead, eds., *Predicting religion*, p. i and passim. Sommerville, *The secularization of early modern England*, p. 3, warns that 'we are certainly not discussing the decline of Christianity' (although treating the changes he explores as a 'process', pp. 11, 179–80, or 'various processes', p. 178, effecting a transition from just one binary alternative to its opposite). McLeod, *Secularisation in western Europe*, argues that 'rather than one simple storyline, we need a narrative in which a variety of plots and sub-plots are intertwined', p. 286.

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challenge in 1965 to dispense with the category 'secularization' should now be re-examined; not because nothing changes[138] but because the unified category obscures the important and complex changes that manifestly occurred, many only recently. And given the symbiotic relation between the concepts of 'secularization' and 'modernization', a reconsideration of the first cannot leave the second wholly untouched.[139]

Martin, *On secularization*, p. 3, proposes, in place of secularization as 'a once-for-all unilateral process', a model of 'successive Christianizations followed by or accompanied by recoils'.

[138] 'Secularization is happening, yet secularization theory is wrong': Brown, *The death of Christian Britain*, p. x. For an argument that this paradox entails 'a re-examination of the nature of "religion" itself', see Morris, 'Secularization and religious experience'.

[139] Davie, *The sociology of religion*, ch. 5, 'Modernity: a single or plural construct?', and pp. 247–9. Her reconsideration, as yet, still accepts 'modernity' and seeks only to diversify its meanings.

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