Modelling Religion and Nationalism on a Godly-Civil Continuum

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Abstract

There is no precise distinction between traditional godly religion and civil secular religion; both phenomena are in fact quite similar. This is an odd statement to present almost fifty years after Robert Bellah's momentous "Civil Religion in America" and a century and a half after Rousseau coined the term civil religion. In order to explain this assertion, we will begin our discussion of civil religion by placing it in its broader context, that of religion itself. Recognizing its capacity to mobilize human resources like no other social mechanism, religion is first of all defined, and its essential characteristics are outlined.

When examining the attributes of religion, we shall find that many of these same characteristics are typical of nationalism and patriotism as well. In order to distinguish between religion and these ostensibly secular phenomena we propose a godly-civil continuum, which maps and compares traditional and civil religions and the nexus between them. We suggest that these seemingly different phenomena share a common prototype and differ only in the degree to which godly authorities or civil authorities gain dominance one over the other in a particular political system.

Keywords: Religion, civil religion, nationalism, patriotism

Introduction The Characteristics of Religion

Scholars have been trying to understand the social expression of religion at least since the nineteenth century (Spilka et al., 2003: 3-23). The scholarly discussion about religion reflects a divide between those who maintain substantive definitions of religion and those who hold functional views. Substantive definitions relate to the content of the religious phenomenon, referring mainly to the sacred (belief, doctrine, devotion, rituals, agents), whereas functional definitions point to the utility or the effect that religion has (community, immortality). (Fursech, Repstad, 2006: 16-20; Droogers, 2009: 263-269).

Several definitions from scholarly literature have been considered for the purpose of operationalizing the term of religion in this study. One definition was Max Muller's proposal that religion is:

[…] a mental faculty which […] in spite of sense and reason, enables man to apprehend the infinite under different names and under varying disguises (Muller, [1880] 1930: 21).

Keith Yandell proposed that religion is:

[…] a conceptual system that provides an interpretation of the world and the place of human beings in it, bases an account of how life should be lived [… and sets] rituals, institutions, and practices (Yandell, 1999: 16).

Talcott Parsons and Anthony Wallace described the prototype of religion as having certain qualities, seven that are essential: (1) A belief in the existence of a divine entity, supernatural and metaphysical, that rules the world; (2) A solid doctrine that constructs the framing of reality and forms the moral codes according to which everything in life can be explained; (3) Total devotion, expressed often by personal willingness for self-sacrifice; (4) Public rituals and ceremonies; (5) A cohesive community; (6) Immortality; (7) Social agents and institutions that continually maintain religion and ensure that all the other attributes do not erode (Parsons, 1979: 62-65; Wallace, 1966: 52-101).

A Divine Entity

All religions are characterized first and foremost by a complex system of beliefs in a divine or superhuman power, and a sense of dependence on a power that is beyond human command (Radcliff-Browne, 1956: 157). Religion is a universal feature of human culture in the sense that every society recognizes the existence of unsolved and awe-inspiring extraordinary manifestations of reality (Lowie, 1936: xvi). Thus, the practices and rituals that are typical for religion derive from a belief that a divine superpower, a supernatural being, controls the universe. The basic common denominator of all religions is the belief that there are spirits that inhabit an invisible world and people have a relationship with them (Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi, 1975; Beit-Hallahmi, 1989; Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle, 1997). William James portrayed the essence of faith in a divine entity as an acceptance of the existence of some parallel cosmos:

[…] there stretches beyond this visible world an unseen world of which we now know nothing positive, but in its relation to which the true significance of our present mundane life consists (James, [1897] 1956: 51).

The deep faith in mystic forces enables religion to act as a mediator between the invisible supernatural, godly world and the visible, natural, human one. This postulate as a definer of religion provides the researcher

with an initial cross-cultural clear distinction between religious and non-religious ideologies and behavior (Beit-Hallahmi, 2006: 15).

A Solid Doctrine

The leading feature of religion is its entirety. It is a decisive set of values that bears no compromise. This array of ideas is a doctrine, typical for every religion and at the same time differing according to the specific religion. It is the religious doctrine that organizes the group affections of identity and solidarity, which form the foundations for its ability to mobilize social resources (Dow, 2007; Southwold, 1978). The power of religious doctrine explains not only the relationship of religiousness with collective action, but also the believers' readiness to make costly personal sacrifices and even to participate in acts of violence (Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle, 1997).

Religious doctrine is made solid and coherent through the use of religious texts. Within these texts, three traits of doctrinal cohesiveness are prominent: (i) integration: most elements hang together and cross-reference each other; (ii) deduction: by considering the general principles, one can infer the religious position on a whole variety of situations; (iii) stability: believers get the same messages from different sources on which the religious tradition is founded (Boyer, 2001: 278).

Total Devotion

The vitality of religion, as scholars have realized, stems from its capacity to be absolute. It serves as a complete and infinite value system (Kishimoto, 1961: 236-240). One's religion is, therefore, one's dedication to a certain purpose that might often even determine his course of life (Ferre, 1970). Understanding the totality within which religion operates is illustrated in the logic of some common idiomatic expressions. When someone is personally obsessive about sport, for example, we might say something like "soccer is his religion". The word "fanatic", describing someone who is filled with an extreme and uncritical enthusiasm or zeal, is derived from the Latin word "fannum" that translates into "temple" and stands for a religious source for devotion (Rapoport, 1991). Religion has the capacity to induce commitment and dedication exceeding any other social mechanism (Argyle, 1970: 116-117).

Rituals and Ceremonies

Religious rituals are a set of practices, that adherents of a religion are expected to perform, through which the participants relate to the sacred (Lessa ans Vogt, 1979: 220). Rituals are repeated formal patterns of social behavior, which are expressive and symbolic. Religious rituals tend to attach value to objects and to events which, too, are important objects, or

symbolically representative of such objects, that link together the people in a community (Radcliffe-Browne, 1979; Argyle, 2000: 116-117).

Ritual is manipulative in the sense that it combines certain kinds of action with mental process. It is communicative, customary, prescribed, playful, stereotypic, and secretive. The specific actions that are taken throughout ritual include reading (silently, out loud, or both), singing, group processions, dance, and sacrifice. Rituals also include some form of union and communication with the supernatural sphere that characterizes the particular religion (Collins, 2009: 672).

Ritual constructs religion by acting as social glue; it is a vehicle for securing social unity. By making the critical acts and the social contracts of human life public and subject to supernatural sanctions, religious belief and ritual strengthens the bonds of social cohesion (Malinowski, 1979: 46; Radcliff-Browne, [1922] 1964; Glickman, 1963).

Community

From its etymological roots, the word "religion", *religio* in its Latin origins, has two distinctive sources. The first one, *relegere*, from *legere*, means to bring together, to gather. This meaning recognizes that any society that chooses to group together does so on the basis of a common religion. The second etymological source is *religare*, from *ligare*, that means to tie and to bind together. This meaning indicates the moral force that is essential for controlling and regulating human beings, and points to the social regulatory practices of religion (Derrida, 1998).

The meanings and linguistic origins of religion stress its social foundations. Durkheim and others, who viewed religion as eminently social, argue that religious representations are collective ones and express collective realities. Ceremonies and rituals are actions that take place in the midst of assembled groups and are destined to excite, maintain, or recreate mental states among group members. According to the social functionalist attitude, religion attaches the individual with the solemn obligations of social life; it makes the vital ties of society's common life sacred by turning every important human bond into a union with the divine as well. Through religion, following this reasoning, one belongs to a spiritual community, where his personal obligations to the common – be it family, tribe, or any social institution – are divine, and his devotion is total (Boodin, 1915).

Immortality

All religions share visions of death and recognize that we are all eventually doomed to die. The common denominator of all religions, however, is the perception that death is merely a passage to another life, and this after-life takes its various forms in different religions accordingly

(Huizinga [1919] 2013: 124-125). Hence, within the religious sphere, people overcome death by a variety of techniques: their spirits do not die; they come back in another form; they wait eternally for the Last Judgment (Boyer, 2001: 203-204). Religion did not only create sacred space, where important lifecycles are determined, but it also put death in the midst of this sacred space and established it as an integral part of these lifecycles. Since prehistoric times, religions have stressed personal immortality either through the rise of one's soul to heaven or by some form of reincarnation. Additionally, promises of resurrection monopolize religions as a framework for the existence of some form of afterlife once life on earth ends (Beit-Hallahmi, 2006: 16).

Social Agents and Institutions

Social life tends to be ambiguous and full of conflicts; naturally, people have their doubts and differences over a variety of issues. In order to reaffirm the divine anchor of their basic beliefs, believers turn to specific persons whom they consider to have religious authority. Consequently, those who hold religious authority decisively determine courses of action and interpret the words and wishes of the Divine. By virtue of this special status, religious specialists or clergy gain the social power and he legitimacy to impose moral and normative decisions on communities of believers (Borg, 2009).

The Term of Civil Religion

There is no doubt about the role that Christianity played, for example, in the eleventh century, when hundreds of thousands of Catholics were willing to take the deadly path to the Holy Land once Pope Urban II urged them to do so (Duncalf, 1909). The Crusaders were called to their death for a holy cause just like other believers throughout history. Moslems heeded a call to jihad, and were willing to sacrifice their lives for a divine purpose. Jews went to war to "sanctify His Name" rather than accept pagan beliefs.

However, the puzzle of human collective behavior and the willingness to sacrifice seems far from being solved by an inquiry that is limited to religion. There are also many examples of collective behavior that were inspired by secular motives and ideas. Take, for instance, the strange case of Italian Fascism. On October 2, 1936, an enormous wave of rallies took place throughout Italy, with 50 percent of all Italians storming the streets and gathering in town squares to express their support of Benito Mussolini's announcement of the invasion of Ethiopia, avowing their willingness to fight. In the Piazza Venezia in Rome, crowds of ordinary Italians pushed and elbowed to get nearer the balcony where the Duce gave his speech. They shouted and screamed ecstatic replies to their leader's

rhetoric appeals. Spontaneous popular enthusiasm for Fascism and for the Duce seemed to create a unitary bond between Mussolini and his followers. The Duce expressed this vividly:

Blackshirts of the Revolution, men and women of Italy, Italians scattered throughout the world, across the mountains and across the oceans, listen! A solemn hour is about to strike in the history of the fatherland. Twenty million men are at this moment gathered in the piazzas through the whole of' Italy. Never in the history of mankind has there been seen a more gigantic demonstration. Twenty million men: a single heart, a single will, a single decision. […] Forty four million Italians are marching in unison with this army. [...] Never more than in this historic epoch has the Italian people revealed the force of its spirit and the power of its character (Connor, 1992: 52).

Patriotic convulsion in Fascist Italy was expressed by the people not only in crowded rallies. Women queued up to hand over their wedding rings in order to assist the government in financing the war, demonstrating an active desire to participate in the national effort at personal costs. When the government officially invited the public to donate all gold objects to the national cause, about 35 thousand kilos of gold were collected (Corner, 2010).

During the following decade nearly four million Italians served in the Italian Army of World War II, and about half a million of them lost their lives (Overy, 1995). Even though historians have found criticism of the war effort amongst the high ranks of the Italian Army as well as some signs of popular disapproval, the fact remains that millions of Italians went willingly and enthusiastically to fight for the Duce and Italy. Is there a connection between the long and bloody march from Rome to Stalingrad and the Christian march to Jerusalem in the eleventh century? Which God was it that led hundreds of thousands of Italians to march to their heroic death? The answer, according to this study, lies within the continuum of forms that religion can take. In the case of Mussolini and his followers, as in the case of Nazism and Soviet Communism (Zeldin, 1969: 100-111) that flourished during the same decades, we are witnessing an extreme form of a different kind of religion that plays according to similar rules: the civil religion.

Civil religion is a term that was coined by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau, a thinker of the Enlightenment and of the French Revolution, envisioned a new form of religion that was the product of secular legislation and which united society with a spiritual foundation consisting not of God but rather of the state, its institutions and laws (Rousseau, [1762] 1960). Pride in the state, veneration for its institutions and reverence for its laws and customs should be inculcated in citizens. It was the responsibility of the state to teach moral values and a civic creed that would foster loyalty, obligation

and brotherhood among its citizens. Civil religion was to be a top- down phenomenon; it was in effect a political religion, bearing a politico-religious dogma which would be inculcated into the citizens of the state by its leaders and institutions. Rousseau had an instrumental view of civil religion, as a means by which state authorities could ensure unity, loyalty and obedience (Cristi, 2001).

Durkheim perceived civil religion somewhat differently. While its purpose was in fact the same, Durkheim saw the development of a civil religion as a bottom-up process, in which civil religion was created by the people. In his last major work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), Durkheim postulated that religion was not divinely or supernaturally inspired; it was rather a product of society (Durkheim, [1917] 2001: 43). Deriving his conclusion from a study of an Australian aborigine tribe, he noted that a religion could replace belief in a supernatural being with an earthly substitute: the public. In Durkheim's words: "The god of the clan […] can therefore be nothing else than the clan itself" (Durkheim, [1917] 2001: 28). The deity is at its base an expression of the self-worship of the collective. Unlike Rousseau, Durkheim did not see civil religion as an instrumental political process to secure loyalty to a particular social order nor was he interested in its political utility. For Durkheim, civil religion emanates from the people themselves as an expression of self-love and serves as an agent of social cohesion; as such, it establishes the norms and values that define the social order.

During the 1930s, Talcott Parsons building upon Durkheim's notion of an allegedly godless form of religion, described American culture as being shaped by a secular style of Christianity (Parsons, 1935). Decades later, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Parsons and others brought back into use the specific term of civil religion (Coleman, 1970; Hammond, 1976; Thomas and Flippen (1972); Wimberly, 1976). Best-known and one of the first in this new wave was Parsons' student, Robert Bellah. In 1967, Bellah published his seminal article titled *Civil Religion in America* (Bellah, 1967), and evoked a new concept of social order. Bellah's article electrified the scholarly community and resulted in scores of articles responding to his thesis; it stirred up a debate over civil religion in the United States. He asserted that there was in the United States an elaborate well-institutionalized civil religion, residing alongside and differentiated from churches and synagogues. According to Bellah, most Americans share a common Judeo-Christian religious base which provides a common foundation of sanctity to their secular political institutions and to their domestic and foreign policies as well. This common base gave religious legitimacy to political authority and inspired the political process. This he found most clearly in the frequent mention of God in presidential speeches. Civil religion in the United States

ascribed to ostensibly secular institutions a measure of godly reverence and sanctity that could unite and also inspire its citizens. “Defense of liberty”, the Constitution Following Bellah, most contemporary academic discourse refers to the American case as the prototype of civil religion, which can then be applied to our understanding of other modern societies (Bellah, 1967; 1975).

The godly connection which provides inspiration and reverence to American secular institutions need not be present in civil religion as such. Veneration for institutions, leaders, and public symbols can be fostered by means of a secular ideology such as nationalism, or secular totalitarian ideologies such as fascism and communism. Within the framework of civil religion, not only is the almost fanatic support for Fascism understood but also the motivation of patriots throughout history to declare, each in their own language, Horace's *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, "Sweet and fitting it is to die for the fatherland" (Grafton and Settis, 2010: 287).

Nationalism and Patriotism: Components of Civil Religion

Civil religion necessarily includes an aspect of nationalism, since it unites the nation through its role in politics (Santiago, 2009). In the name of nationalism, people have accomplished the greatest human achievements but have also executed humanity's worst atrocities and genocide. Some scholars distinguish between patriotism and nationalism, mainly because correctly or incorrectly the latter is associated with centuries of bloodshed in Europe. Maurizio Viroli, for example, differentiates between the two concepts, claiming that nationalism is exclusive whereas patriotism is generally inclusive (Viroli, 1995). Patriotism, following this distinction, puts forward affective connections with the nation, its institutions and principles, whereas nationalism spotlights chauvinism and superiority, thus giving rise to the notion that nationalism is simply a corrupt version of patriotism (de Figueiredo and Elkins, 2003). Whereas patriotism is considered a virtue, nationalism can be seen a fault. Perhaps the best illustration for this position is the assertion that nationalism is no more than patriotism’s bloody sister (Schaar, 1981). Charles De Gaulle, for this matter, is quoted as having said that "patriotism means that the love towards one's countrymen comes first; nationalism means that the hatred toward others comes first" (Poper, 2004: 195).

However, this study adopts the view that patriotism, like nationalism, is an expression of a strong and uncompromising bond to the country and to the people, and a resolute unconditional support for its values its critics. Patriotism, just like nationalism, is connected to a deep emotional identification with the country’s culture and symbols. Patriotic national pride is based on an ideal portrayal of state and nation, shaped by the political

establishment in schools, media, and other social organizations (Dekker et al., 2003).

Some scholars regard nationalism not only as different in its essence from religion but also as its contradiction. British nationalism developed in the eighteenth century on the foundation of rationalism and humanism that became popular among an emerging anti-aristocratic Franco-phobic bourgeoisie that strove to establish a more egalitarian socio-political order (Newman, 1987; Greenfeld, 1992). In France, inspired by the writings of Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau, the revolutionaries, made Man the yardstick of everything and God lost his primacy. Society became now, in the eyes of these political philosophers, a collection of free citizens, and the nation-state became the framework for these citizens to govern themselves. The early flowering of democracy went hand in hand with the establishment of modern nationalism. Napoleon Bonaparte used French nationalism to justify his military campaigns across Europe to distribute the enlightened ideals of the French Revolution. Indeed, Napoleon's invasions spread the concept of nationalism all over the continent (Motyl, 2001; Greenfeld, 1992).

Decades later, towards the end of the nineteenth century, anti-clericalism became practically a part of the official ideology of nations. Schoolmasters, for example, who were part of the large civil service system, were dispatched across the country to eradicate the influence of ecclesiastical teaching and teach the values of the nation. The nation-state that took shape in France, as well as in other small states in Western Europe, was a political entity with a nationalist, patriotic political ideology, devoid of religion and a secularized public sphere (Weber, 1976).

Thus, the Western European nationalism that emerged presented a secular rationalist social order. Marcel Mauss' definition reflects this approach towards nationalism:

[A nation is] a society materially and morally integrated, with a stable and permanent central authority, with determinate borders whose inhabitants possess a relative moral, mental, and cultural unity and consciously adhere to the state and its laws (Mauss, 1969: 108).

Typically, in this definition, as well as other definitions of nationalism, we do not find reference to any belief or religious doctrine. However from a functionalist perspective, not only are the two phenomena, religion and nationalism, similar in their behavioral manifestations but they are also similar in the way they affect society and influence the loyalties and commitments of their adherents. To further clarify this point we will utilize the essential qualities of religion derived from the works of Talcott Parsons and Anthony Wallace to analyze nationalism and national patriotism (Parsons, 1979; Wallace, 1966).

A Divine Entity

National patriotism relates to loyalties to one's country and to its inhabitants. There is a wide consensus among scholars that the essence of patriotism is the supremacy of the group over its individual members. It is something that society forms in order to justify the devotion of major private resources to collective goals (Ben-Amos and Bar-Tal, 2004; Schaar, 1981; Viroli, 1995; Lewin, 2010). Hence, the core of national patriotism is devotion to a social sphere; dedication to the attitudes, actions and organizations that belong to the collective group. This almost blind devotion is similar to the unquestioned belief in the supernatural in the context of religion. It allows one to relinquish the need for a reestablishment of decisions in every junction; it is stronger than any idea of justice or ethics, and forms, therefore, the grounds for people's readiness to sacrifice for the object of their patriotic loyalty (Grodzins, 1956; Oldenquist, 1982). Religion may provide the identity that turns the community into a cohesive social entity and connects it with a particular geographical space. The combination of ethnic nationalism with national religion as in the case of Catholic Ireland, Catholic Croatia or Muslim Bosnia can make devotion to the national cause all the more powerful.

A Solid Doctrine

Patriotism involves an understanding that the object of patriotic loyalty, that is – the political entity, deserves dedication because of the values that it stands for. National identity includes accepting the values and ideals of one's country; national patriotism; in practice is loyalty not just to the specific political order but rather loyalty to the ideas that it stands for (Keller, 2005). Ideas such as democracy, freedom, and equality have inspired patriots throughout history to support their governments and to make sacrifices in their name.

It is important to note that there is an inherent tendency of national patriotism to go often beyond the morals of any constructed ideology and to even reject logic if need be. The well-known declaration of Stephen Decatur, the American naval officer, is perhaps one of the best examples illustrating this: "Our Country! In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but right or wrong, our country!" (Somerville, 1981: 571).

Total Devotion

National patriotic loyalties often lead to what some scholars refer to as obsessive dedication, an unconditional love, and a compulsive commitment to the object of admiration (Tamir, 1997). Willingness to sacrifice is an elementary attribute of national patriotism, the core of its beliefs and affections. This is why military service and participation in

combat, where the personal risks are great, are often regarded as the ultimate expressions of patriotism (Somerville, 1981). American children are commonly taught the words of Nathan Hale, hero of the Revolutionary War, before he was executed by the British: "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country" (Seymour, 2006: 122).

Rituals and Ceremonies

Religions are clearly marked by public and private rituals and ceremonies that conjoin believers together into a community and celebrate past events. In patriotic nationalism too rituals commemorate moments of common history that mark milestones in shaping and crystallizing the nation. They are constructed to establish a crucial link between the private and the public. Hence, although patriotic rites were originally militaristic by nature, they later included public parades, singing the national anthem, flags, speeches of political leaders, festivals, and even pilgrimage to specific cites of importance to the collective identity (Barber, 1949; Lukes, 2004; Alexander, 2004). National rituals may also take the form of visits to national history museums and memorials of national leaders, which become in effect national shrines (Glass, 2009: 12-13). Perhaps the most outstanding shrines are the mausoleums of national leaders such as Russian Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Chinese Mao Zedong, Vietnamese Ho Chi Minh, and the memorials of American Presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

The educational system is one of the most important spheres where patriotic celebrations are practiced. During the late nineteenth century, patriotic rituals were fused together with school practices and composed a sort of national liturgy. Rites are iterated at school annually. Before studying their country's history, school-children already internalize emotions, recount myths, and identify with the nation and its political entity (Carretero, 2011: 119-122; 186-190).

Community

Religion, as mentioned earlier, unites believers into a community and creates a relationship between God and His People. Similarly, national patriots share a love for their countrymen. It is not a humanitarian love that emanates from deep compassion toward all members of the human race; instead, it is directed specifically toward those who belong to one's particular group, even in cases when no prior personal acquaintance exists. Moreover, the patriot's commitment to his compatriots has nothing to do with friendship or even familiarity; most of the people for whom he acts will remain unknown to him forever. Such patriotic loyalty, then, refers to the large

national community, which extends far beyond one's personal ties and networks (Primoratz, 2002).

Immortality

The national patriot who sacrifices his life, or hers, for the country becomes an immortal hero. The hero's life is renewed in the nation's collective memory—and the endurance of the nation becomes a necessary condition for the promise of a lasting commemoration of the patriotic deed (Tamir, 1997). Thus, past and future are joined in patriotism; the belief that the national group is an entity rooted in history is essential for the individual to believe in its eternal future, and the belief in an eternal future of the group, promising commemoration of the patriot's sacrifice, is a reflection of its historic past (Ben-Amos, 1997).

Social Agents and Institutions

Empirical studies have shown the importance of trust in political leadership. In fact, there is evidence that vertical trust, reflecting people's confidence in officials who lead the military and other state institutions, is crucial in maintaining patriotic action; its absence is likely to lead to a decline in national patriotism (Lewin, 2010). National leaders often inspire high esteem and even veneration in the eyes of citizens not because of their own attributes but rather because of the revered office that they fill. "Hail to the Chief", the official anthem of the US. President played on the arrival of the President at public gatherings, creates the mystic of the office. While trust in political leadership may be declining (Hetherington, 2004), in times of crisis the public still look to their leaders to offer guidance, solace and hope for the future, a role which in the religious context is filled by the clergy. Without the presence of God, then, national patriotism seems to demonstrate the very same traits that religion does, thus forming the profound exampleof a a secular civil religion, that is – a religion where the nation replaces God.

Social groups may perform rituals and live within a clear system of beliefs and common collective principles even with the absence of a godly entity (Robertson, 1970). As early as the 1930s, Gaetano Mosca noted that both religious institutions and political parties use the very same techniques of myths, symbols and rituals in order to manage the masses. He called it *crowd manipulation*, implying that it was all about manipulating the public and tricking people into action (Mosca, 1939). This approach towards both religion and politics sees tradition as no more than a manipulative tool to motivate and control the masses. It corresponds to Eric Hobsbawm's assertion that social practices are in fact demagogic means, consciously

invented by political actors in order to gain legitimacy for their power; rituals and other religious expressions are, hence, essentially utilitarian and instrumental (Hobsbawm, 1983).

Consequently, the border between religion and nationalism is not always a clear one, particularly since nationalism often fulfills some of the functions that are considered religious ones, like the sense of belonging to a certain group or the willingness to sacrifice for the nation. Carlton Hayes, for example, left no doubt with the title of his book *Nationalism: A Religion* and asserted clearly that nationalism was no more than a modern substitute replacing the historic form of supernatural religion (Hayes, 1960). Boyd Shafer, who wrote about nationalism in the West during the second half of the twentieth century, suggested that in modern France nation and nationalism supplied new gods, new hopes, and a means to achieve a good life, at a time of instability and insecurity (Shafer, 1955). However, even proponents of the "nationalism versus religion" theory would find it hard to deny that even if nationalism was a secular force that pushed religion aside, religion often proved to be so resilient that it co-opted nationalism under its control (Canetti-Nisim, 2003). Since religion is capable of arousing deep social allegiance, nonreligious leaders who strive for secular goals often use it manipulatively (Rapoport, 1991). The state may have the bureaucratically efficient apparatus to manage society, but it is actually religion that creates a legitimacy that is necessary to maintain the secular state (Rothi et al., 2005).

The inherent bond between traditional religion and nationalism explains why in European countries, and not necessarily only there, there is a deliberate formal connection between religions and state institutions. In fact, many states have fostered religion as the very foundation of their nationality, as in Greece, Ireland, Italy, Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries.

The Catholic Church has also proved to be powerful in post-Communist Poland. When the country's democratic constitution was formulated in 1997, the secular forces were strong enough to prevent any official status from being conferred on the Church. Nevertheless, the preamble to the Constitution reflects the notion of an accepted connection between Catholic Christianity and Polish national identity (Durham et al., 2003; Flere, 2011).

The American case of the relationship between religion and national patriotism is noteworthy. The First Amendment of the American constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion and prevents the federal government from making any law respecting an establishment of religion. However, the American creed, this large foundation of common identity, is based both on the Declaration of Independence and on the Anglo-Protestant culture of its forefathers. The religious dimension of this culture was a commitment to

Christianity and its values, among them the Protestant idea of individualism (Huntington, 2004).

In many democratic countries, religion has been fostered as a synergetic vehicle for national unity. However, it is important to note that at the same time, citizens of these states, as individuals, are free not to practice religion. They regard themselves as secular because they do not practice rituals in their daily lives; however, at the same time, they identify with the Christian ethos of public institutions in the country and participate in religious rituals at key points in their lives (for example, rites of passage such as baptism, marriage and burial) provided by their church (Bruce, 1996; 2000).

Conclusively, one can see that when observing national patriotism's basic traits and when comparing patriotism to religion according to the latter's seven qualities – we are in fact witnessing diverse types of the same phenomenon, that are intertwined with each other.

There is broad understanding that civil religion contains a civil component and a religious one, but the question remains which of them is the nucleus of this phenomenon. Are we dealing with occurrences where politics takes the form of religion or are we concerned with religion that asserts itself in politics? Is civil religion a set of godly beliefs that is trimmed and supplemented to support the political order, in which case the political order is the center, or is the reverse true and civil religion is the framework within which godly religion, takes over politics in order to establish itself in the minds and hearts of the citizens? No doubt, in both cases we encounter a fusion of political life with religious imagery and practices. However, whereas the first option implies that we should examine temporal political authority the second sends us to inquire about godly authority and its political expression.

The Godly-Civil Continuum

This study has set itself the task of framing the concept of civil religion in a comparative perspective. In order to do so, the point of departure of our analysis is that civil religion falls, as the simple linguistic structure of the words implies, within and without the boundaries of religion; civil religion is, put simply, a religion that is civil in its nature.

As we have explained earlier, civil religion is a way in which particular political and social arrangements acquire some kind of sacred meaning and as a result gain elevated stature and legitimacy. The civil religion borrows some of its symbols and rituals from the dominant traditional religion; consequently, it provides the social glue that unites societies around a common base (Mcclay, 2010).

Our conceptualization of a general model that puts onto one continuum civil religion and traditional (godly) religions follows the approach outlined by Emilio Gentile in his book *Politics as Religion*. Gentile concluded that religion is a phenomenon that is liable to be a godly one, but it is also likely to be a non-godly one; both the godly and the non-godly religions belong to the same continuum of social occurrences. He generalizes the phenomenon as follows:

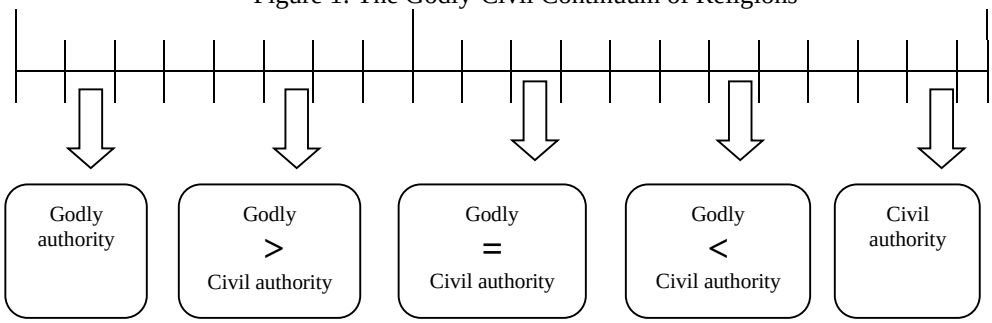
A developed system of beliefs, myths, rituals, and symbols that create an aura of sacredness around an entity belonging to this world and turn it into a cult and an object of worship and devotion. […] Any human activity from science to history or from entertainment to sport can be invested with [… sacredness] and become the object of a […] cult, thus constituting a […] religion (Gentile, 2006: 76).

The analytical model of the relations between civil and traditional religion regard them both as springing from a common prototype. The paradigm suggested here is that relations between traditional religion and civil religion are the continuance of the centuries-long struggle between godly authorities and civil authorities. Hence, the two phenomena are not dichotomous; rather, there is a continuum stretching from one pole to another, with states and nations falling along a range, some of them being closer to traditional religion and others located near the opposite extremity of a secular civil religion. If we were to map out the relations between different manifestations of civil religion and the authority of the state in different societies, some would be located closer to the edge of the continuum where state and God mesh into one dominant authority, and where religious leadership and political leadership are one and otherswould be located on the opposite edge where legitimacy is based entirely on a secular model of civil religion. In order to be as exact as possible within the limitations of social sciences, we suggest to split the continuum into five different categories. These categories reflect the relative distribution of power that the two sources of authority have over society: (I) at one pole of the continuum – political entities where godly authority reigns; (II) political entities where a godly authority is dominant but weaker civil institutions have their own legitimacy and authority; (III) at the center of the continuum – political entities in which godly authorities and civil authorities share power; (IV)political entities where a civil authority is dominant but a weaker godly authority has some legitimacy and authority; (V) at the other pole of the continuum – political entities where civil authority reigns and religion is illegitimate and powerless.

The five different categories form two groups of religions: the godly one, where a godly authority either totally controls or dominates the political realm, and the civil one, where a secular, civil authority either shares,

dominates or replaces its godly rival. The paradigm is illustrated in *Figure 1: The Godly-Civil Continuum of Religions*.

Figure 1: The Godly-Civil Continuum of Religions



The strength of this model is that it is an inclusive one. Combined with the definitions of religion, as outlined above, it has the capacity to form a framework for understanding a variety of social phenomena and comparing them. It is within this framework that we can refer to nationalism, patriotism and a variety of social movements, to view them as religious forms of social experience, to place them accordingly along the godly-civil continuum, and consequently to deepen our understanding of these social phenomena.

In conclusion, when we inquire why individuals and societies are ready to kill or to die for a cause, to suffer hardships or to celebrate ecstatically collective victories and achievements, a broad comparative perspective should be adopted. Consequently, by reducing our discussion to only one dimension, one that refers solely to religion, godly or civil, the linear model provides us with a conceptual framework that allows us to understand political behavior in a large comparative context. We can now take diverse social and political experiences, place them along the model's continuum and evaluate them not only in their specific historical setting but also in relation to each other.

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