

Civil Religion and the Revitalization of Secularism in Postmodern Age

Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Abdul Qayyum*

A paradigm shift was brought about by renaissance and reformation in the man's way of thinking. Prior to renaissance and reformation, the ideas and thoughts of man were based on revelation. It was the staunch belief of the man that this universe is made by Allah the Almighty and all phenomenon of nature by his command. Man also believed in spirit, angels and the life hereafter which depends on the deeds of man. But after reformation this idea of life changed out rightly, and materialistic approach was given priority at the expense of spiritualism. Now society sought secular and philosophical foundation and religion became personal matter of the man.

The man did away with the metaphysical basis of knowledge and empiricism was made the foundation of his knowledge. Hereafter was scarified at the altar of these worldly pleasures.

This shift in man's thinking influenced religion, politics, society and history to the greater extent.

On October 31, 1517 A.D Martin Luther wrote his thesis which contained objections over church, and in this way he declared independence from the church or religion. His thesis enabled people to decide the things according to their own whims and wishes, unlike traditional method in which religion had prime authority. Consequently, those moral standards which were derived from revelation lost their significance.

In the backdrop of these developments John Calvin declared interest lawful, which was previously not allowed by religion. So religion was discarded by modern philosophers and thinkers because they thought religion is an obstacle in the way of progress.

George Santayana branded religion as a kind of poetry. To Croce religion is mythology only and nothing else. Emile Durkheim took religion as a sociological phenomenon and Karl Marx opined that religion is opium for masses. Due to this blunt criticism of religion truth faded away from human life and the belief which is prerequisite of religion was replaced by scientific naturalism.

Auguste Comte presented a thesis about the evolution of human mind which has three stages. He says:

"We may proceed at once to investigate the natural laws by which the advance of the human mind proceeds. The scientific

* Lecturer, Sheikh Zayed Islamic Centre, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

principle of the theory appears to me to consist in the great philosophical law of the succession of the three states—the primitive theological state, the transient metaphysical, and the final positive state—through which the human mind has to pass, in every kind of speculation”⁽¹⁾.

Three stages mentioned by Auguste Comte are given below:

1. Theological state
2. Metaphysical state
3. Positivism⁽²⁾ state

In the epoch of religion each and every development was attributed to god and goddess. In the metaphysical period man sought help from the metaphysical hypothesis. The life hereafter was taken into consideration for the interpretation of all events.

Third period is positivism which means scientific and it is modern era. In this period the interpretation of events is induced with the help of experiments and evidences. Comte pay gratitude to religion that it helped human mind to reach up to this scientific era.

Thus there is no more need of religion because human mind has got maturity.

John Stuart Mill thins Comte’s terminology badly chosen as implying unintended connotations, at least to the English mind. He prefers:

1. Personal or Volitional
2. Abstractional or Ontological
3. Phenomenal or Experimental⁽³⁾

Lester Frank Ward opined that human mind has passed through three phases namely:

1. Teleological
2. Ontological
3. Positivism⁽⁴⁾

It can be inferred after analyzing above mentioned philosophers that the era of religion has gone with the winds and modernism has started. Thus to construct a society on the revealed knowledge is no more valid.

Although modern thinkers have discarded religion but they were influenced by its organizational nature. So they had to study religion from socio-political perspective, these philosophers or thinkers given a new outlook to that aspect of religion which can bring about unity, discipline and socio-political integration in a modern nation state. This idea later on took the shape of a new religion which is named “Civil Religion.” This new religion is based on empiricism. Durkheim who was an atheist branded religion as social phenomena in the same back ground. He further propounded the theory of “functional equivalents.” So he enunciated the theory of Civil Religion.

Civil Religion means that religion which can unite and integrate a secular society. So that modern nation state can attain the allegiance of the masses. Howsoever modern western thinkers devised a new concept of God, prophets, sacred scriptures and religious icons for this new religion. Besides this they also presented the concept of national holidays. One can view the preliminary shape of Civil Religion at the time of French revolution. During French revolution its slogan and state became sacred.

Durkheim writes about it in these words:

“This aptitude of society for setting itself up as a god or for creating gods was never more apparent than during the first years of the French Revolution. At this time, in fact, under the influence of the general enthusiasm, things purely laical by nature were transformed by public opinion into sacred things: these were the Fatherland, liberty, and reason”⁽⁵⁾.

Robert Bellah also writes:

“The French revolution was anticlerical to the core and attempted to set up an antichristian Civil Religion. Throughout modern French history, the chasm between traditional catholic symbols and the symbolism of 1789 has been immense”⁽⁶⁾.

Before we go into further detail, it seems appropriate to analyze Civil Religion from its variant definitions.

Definition of Civil Religion:

Samuel P. Huntington says about civil religion that “‘in the United States’, Tocqueville said, ‘Religion...is mingled with all the habits of the nation and all the feelings of patriotism, whence it derives a peculiar force’. The mingling of religion and patriotism is evident in America’s civil religion. Writing in the 1960s, Robert Bellah defined civil religion, ‘at its best’ as a ‘genuine apprehension of universal and transcendent religious reality as seen in or, one could almost say, as revealed through the experience of the American people’. Civil religion enables Americans to bring together their secular politics and their religious society, to marry God and country, so as to give religious sanctity to their patriotism and nationalist legitimacy to their religious beliefs, and thus to merge what could be conflicting loyalties into loyalty to a religiously endowed country.

America’s civil religion provides a religious blessing to what Americans feel they have in common. It is perfectly compatible with each American belonging to his or her own denomination, believing in a Christian or non-Christian god, or being Deist, as were several of the Founding Fathers. It is not compatible, however, with being atheist, for it is a religion, invoking a transcendental being apart from the terrestrial human world. The American

civil religion encompasses four major elements.

1. First, central to it is the proposition that the American system of government rests on a religious base. It presupposes a Supreme Being. The views of the framers of the Constitution that the republican government they were creating could survive only among a people imbued with religion and morality have been endorsed and repeated by subsequent generations of American leaders. Our institutions 'presuppose a Supreme Being', as Justice William O. Douglas put it, and President Eisenhower similarly declared that 'Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first, the most basic expression of Americanism. Without God there could be no American form of government, nor an American way of life'. To deny God is to challenge the fundamental principle underlying American society and government.
2. A second core element of the civil religion is the belief that Americans are God's 'chosen', or, in Lincoln's phrase 'almost chosen' people, that America is the 'new Israel', with a divinely sanctioned mission to do good in the world. The core of the civil religion, as Conrad Cherry has said, is "the sense of America's special destiny under God." Two of the three Latin phrases the Founding Fathers chose for the republic they were creating sum up this sense of mission: *Annuit Coeptis* (God smiles on our undertakings), and *Novus Ordo Seclorum* (New order for the ages), and *E pluribus unum* (From many one).
3. A third element of American's civil religion is the prevalence of religious allusions and symbols in American public rhetoric, rituals, and ceremonies. Presidents have always taken their oath of office on a Bible and, with other officials, formally assume their offices when, at the conclusion of their oaths, they utter the words, 'So help me God'. Except for Washington in his two-paragraph second inaugural remarks, all presidents have invoked God in their inaugural addresses and in most other major addresses as well. The speeches of some presidents, most notably Lincoln, are filled with religious resonance and biblical references. Eight words, and only eight words, appear on every piece of American currency, bills and coins: 'United States of America' and 'In God We Trust'. Americans pledge allegiance to 'One nation under God'. Major public ceremonies begin with an invocation by a clergyman from one denomination and end with a benediction by a clergyman of a different denomination. The military services have a substantial corps of chaplains, and the daily sessions of Congress open with prayer.
- 4- Fourth, national ceremonies and activities themselves take on a religious aura and perform religious functions. Historically, as Lloyd Warner

argues, celebration of Memorial Day was 'an American sacred ceremony'. So also is the celebration of Thanksgiving, as well as presidential inaugurations and funerals. The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln's second inaugural, Kennedy's inaugural, Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech have all become sacred texts defining America's identity.

The marriage of religion and politics in America's civil religion is well caught in Peter Steinfels's account of the inauguration of Bill Clinton in 1993:

"At its core [was] the solemn administration of an oath on the Bible, preceded and followed by prayers and accompanied by hymns as well as patriotic music....The week was rich with religious gestures alongside moments when the religious overtones, though not explicit, were unmistakable. The inaugural week officially began with a nationwide ringing of church bells. At Howard University, Bill Clinton invoked the memory of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., echoing his lessons and quoting the verse from Scripture that would also close the Inaugural Address....The President was surrounded throughout the day by an array of religious leaders"⁽⁷⁾.

Huntington further says that 'this was not the ceremony of a secular, much less atheistic, society or polity. As the British scholar D. W. Brogan pointed out, in the past when children recited daily the 'American's Creed'⁽⁸⁾ in schools, they performed a religious Exercise as truly as if they began their day by saying, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty' or 'There is no God but God'. Civil religion converts Americans from religious people of many denominations into a nation with the soul of a church.

But, apart from its being American, what is that church? It is a church that has included Protestants, Catholics, Jews, other non-Christians, and even agnostics. It is, however, a church that is profoundly Christian in its origins, symbolism, spirit, accoutrements, and, most importantly, its basic assumptions about the nature of man, history, right and wrong. The Christian Bible, Christian references, biblical allusions and metaphors, permeate expressions of the civil religion. 'Behind the civil religion at every point lie Biblical archetypes,' Bellah has said: 'Exodus, Chosen People, Promised Land, New Jerusalem, Sacrificial Death and Rebirth'. Washington becomes Moses, Lincoln becomes Christ. 'The deepest source of the symbols, beliefs and rituals of the [civil] religion,' Conrad Cherry agrees, 'lies in the Old and New Testaments'. America's civil religion is a nondenominational, national religion and, in its articulated form, not expressly a Christian religion. Yet it is thoroughly Christian in its origins, content, assumptions, and tone. The God in whom their currency says Americans trust is implicitly then Christian God.

Two words, nonetheless, do not appear in civil religion statements and ceremonies. They are “Jesus Christ.” While the American Creed is Protestantism without God, the American civil religion is Christianity without Christ’⁽⁹⁾.

Robert Bellah who formalized the idea of civil religion in Daedalus conference on American Religion in May 1966 says:

“Although matters of personal religious belief, worship, and association are considered to be strictly private affairs, there are, at the same time, certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of American share, These have played a crucial role in the development of American institutions and still provide a religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life, including the political sphere. This public religious dimension is expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals that I am calling the American civil religion”⁽¹⁰⁾.

Bellah goes on to point out that America’s civil religion is certainly not Christianity in anything like the specific sense such as would necessitate belief in Jesus Christ and the Atonement, but is rather more “Unitarian,” in the sense of regarding God as a sort of single supernatural being. But this God is not to be understood simply in the deistic tradition of an aloof Maker who set the world in motion and then left it to shift for itself. But no:

“He is actively interested and involved in history, with a special concern for America”⁽¹¹⁾.

At the heart of civil religion is the idea that America is the Promised Land that God has led people to—out of the land of bondage like Europe and Asia. Thus this nation is to be dedicated to order, law, and justice as God would have them carried out. Bellah quotes extensively from Washington and Jefferson as well as from John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, pointing out the idea of America as charged with a divinely ordained mission to fulfill in bringing about God’s will for mankind. Out of the trauma of the Civil War emerged new themes of sacrifice and rebirth. Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address was replete with Christian symbolism without being specifically Christian (“that those who here gave their lives, that nation might live”). Lincoln’s own “sacrificial” martyrdom enhanced the concept Memorial Day ceremonies and to a lesser extent the ceremonies of the Forth of July, Veterans’ Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Washington’s and Lincoln’s birthdays provided ritual vehicles for the civil religion. Dr. Robert N. Bellah says:

“Behind the civil religion at every point lie biblical archetypes: Exodus, Chosen People, Promised Land, New Jerusalem, and Sacrificial Death and Rebirth. But it is also genuinely American

and genuinely new. It has its own prophets and its own martyrs, its own sacred events and sacred places, its own solemn rituals and symbols. It is concerned that America be a society as perfectly in accord with the will of God as men can make it, and a light to all nations”(12)

Civil Religion has its own theology and beliefs. In this context Robert Nisbet Writes:

“It is no exaggeration to say, in all, that the American Civil Religion had its widely recognized theology, one complete with creed, catechism and dogmas. A complex ritual surrounded the American flag and other symbols of national civil unity”(13)

Tony Lawson defines Civil Religion in this way:

“Where secular symbols such as Flags and national anthems function to promote social solidarity in the way that religion has traditionally done. Durkheim used the term to indicate that there were ‘Functional Equivalents’ to religion in every society, even those which did not have a single or unifying religion”(14).

Beth B. Hess definition of Civil Religion:

“This ‘Universal religion of the nation’ Civil Religion has served the essential functions of any belief system: to legitimize and sanctify (make sacred) the social order and to integrate its members, despite differences of faith. The intermix of nationalism and religion is visible both when we make secular holidays sacred, as on the Forth of July and When we transform sacred holy days into commercial orgies, as tat Christmas. The Civil Religion even has its own integrating rituals that reaffirm collective values”(15)

Anthony Giddens’s definition of Civil Religion is brief but comprehensive:

“Forms of ritual and belief similar to involved in religion, but concerning secular activities such as political parades of ceremonies”(16).

Alexis de Tocqueville, 19th century political scientist, described what he observed in America as a “republican religion”:

“In the United States even the religion of most of the citizens is republican, since it submits the truths of the other world to private judgment, as in politics the care of their temporal interests is abandoned to the good sense of the people. Thus every man is allowed freely to take that road which he thinks will lead him to heaven, just as the law permits every citizen to have the right of choosing his own government”(17).

De Tocqueville observed that the United States had achieved a unique balance between religion and government, whereby the two were disconnected in the Constitution but connected in a broader level through “the prevailing habits and ideas of the people:

“These partisans of liberty [Americans] know that liberty cannot be established without morality, nor morality without faith”⁽¹⁸⁾.

He writes:

“That Providence has given to every human being the degree of reason necessary to direct himself in the affairs that interest him exclusively is the grand maxim upon which civil and political society rests in the United States”⁽¹⁹⁾.

Civil religion goes by many different monikers: civic faith, public piety, republican religion. Benjamin Franklin called it “public religion,” Abraham Lincoln called it “political religion.” Like its different names, civil religion has many variations of expression and definition. But “Civil Religion” is a scholarly term for the widely but informally held set of fundamental political and social principles concerning the history and destiny of a state or nation that help to bind that state or nation together. It is a collection of beliefs, values, ceremonies, and symbols that gives sacred meaning to the political life of the community, provides the nation with an overarching sense of unity that transcends all internal conflicts and differences, and relates the society to the realm of ultimate meaning. It allows a people to look at their political community in a special light and thereby to achieve purposeful social integration and cohesion. Many religious scholars and sociologists claim that some kind of civil religion is indispensable for the maintenance of the social order. Essentially, it is a general faith independent of the power of both the state and the institutional church.

Types of Civil Religion:

The existence of a civil religion in world is now widely accepted. According to Robert Bellah, who stimulated much of the discussion about civil religion with his seminal essay in 1967, “civil religion in America” is “an understanding of the American experience in the light of ultimate and universal reality.”

Russell Richey and Donald Jones have divided civil religion into five-category schema for the organization of civil religion literature⁽²⁰⁾. These categories were folk religion or culture religion, transcendent universal religion of the nation, religious nationalism, democratic faith, Protestant civic piety, and transcendent universal religion of the nation⁽²¹⁾. Richey and Jones felt that all of the various descriptions of civil religion offered by scholars would readily fall under these five categories.

While all have a certain validity, the last (transcendent universal religion of the nation) is most central. This is the meaning originally stressed by Bellah and then refined in the conceptual of Coleman,⁽²²⁾ Gehrig,⁽²³⁾ and Hammond⁽²⁴⁾. Gehrig characterizes it as the most comprehensive perspective because it is capable of performing all three of the traditionally expected religious functions (legitimation, integration, and prophetic guidance), as well as the most inclusive approach because any or all of the other four models may be viewed as manifestations of it⁽²⁵⁾.

Robert Wuthnow in his book, "The Restructuring of American Religion," provided a simplified schema for the study of civil religion. It was of two categories: conservative and liberal. He asserted:

"The civil religion to which we so blithely pay homage has become deeply divided. Like the fractured communities found in our churches, our civil religion no longer unites us around common ideals. Instead of giving voice to a clear image of who we should be, it has become a confusion of tongues. It speaks from competing traditions and offers partial visions of America's future. Religious conservatives offer one version of our divine calling; religious liberals articulate one that is radically different"⁽²⁶⁾.

Wuthnow described in general terms the basic frameworks of the conservative and liberal forms of American civil religion.

Conservative and Liberal Civil Religion:

Dr. Bellah tells us about the kinds of civil religion:

"There have been behind the civil religion from the beginning two great structures of interpretation, the one I shall call biblical, the other utilitarian. The biblical interpretation stands, above all, under the archetype of the covenant, but it is also consonant with the classical theory of natural law as derived from ancient philosophy and handed down by the church fathers. The utilitarian interpretation stands, above all, under the archetype of the social contract and is consonant with the modern theory of natural rights as derived from John Locke. The meaning of every key term in the civil religion—certainly liberty and the pursuit of happiness, but also equality and even life—differs in those two perspectives"⁽²⁷⁾.

According to Bellah, civil religion has following two kinds:

1. Biblical
2. Utilitarian

As an expression of the biblical archetype that stands behind the civil religion let me turn to that great initial sermon of John Winthrop, "A Model of

Christian Charity,” delivered on board ship before the landing in Massachusetts in 1630. This sermon was designed to sketch the religious and ethical foundation of the new society the colonists were to build:

“From hence wee may frame these Conclusions:

1. First all true Christians are of one body in Christ⁽²⁸⁾. Ye are the body of Christ and members of [your?] parte.

21y. The ligamentes of this body which knitt together are love.

31y. Noe body can be perfect which wants its proper ligamentes.

41y. All the partes of this body being thus united are made soe contiguous in a speciall relacion as they must needes partake of each others strength and infirmity, joy, and sorrowe, weal and woe. 1 Cor: 12, 26. If one member suffers all suffer with it, if one be in honour, all rejoyce with it.

51y. This sensiblenes and Sympathy of each others Condictions will necessarily infuse into each parte a native desire and endeavour, to strengthen defend preserve and comfort the other. To insist a little on this Conclusion being the product of all the former the truthe hereof will appeare both by precept and patterne i. John. 3. 10. ye ought to lay downe your lives for the brethren Gal: 6.2. beare ye one anothers burthens and soc fulfill the lawe of Christ⁽²⁹⁾.

Only a little further in the sermon he adds:

“The next consideration is how this love comes to be wrought; Adam in his first estate was a perfect modell of mankinde in all theire generacions, and in him this love was perfected in regard of the habit, but Adam Rent in himselfe from his Creator, rent all his posterity alsoe one from another, whence it comes that every man is borne with this principle in him, to love and seeke himselfe onely and thus a man continueth till Christ comes and takes possession of the soule, and infuseth another principle love to God and our brother⁽³⁰⁾.”

Bellah writes that in Winthrop’s time, there is a great tension between the situation of fallen men, whose disobedience to God rends them also from each other so that they love themselves alone, and the truly Christian community where all are one body in mutual love and concern. The whole Puritan project was an effort to overcome the failings of fallen or natural man and create a holy community, based on love. In an effort to actualize the biblical commandments Winthrop and his friends sought to create a holy commonwealth in England, and if not there then in America. The moral and religious fervor at the root of that effort was the source of much that is good in

American society ever since, but we must not forget its dark side: the moral crusade, the holy war, what Paul Tillich called the sin of religion, to confuse one's own will with the will of God. And Winthrop, for all his moderation and humanity, did display that dark side as when several times he turned persecutor and drove religious dissidents from the Bay Colony⁽³¹⁾.

Partly in reaction against the Puritans the great founders of modern philosophy in England, Hobbes and Locke created a position that was in a sense the dialectical opposite of that of the Puritans. Disturbed by sectarian fanaticism, finding the Puritan goal utopian and finally destructive because, they thought, unrealistic about human nature, they drastically lowered the moral demand, abandoned the principles of Christian politics, and started with natural man, the fallen man of Winthrop, the man who loves himself alone. Thus when, over fifty years after Winthrop's sermon, John Locke discusses the purpose or the end of government he finds it to be not love, as Winthrop would have said, nor justice, as Aristotle would have said, but:

“The great and chief end therefore, of Mens uniting into Commonwealths, and putting themselves under Government, is the Preservation of their Property.”

Or again:

“The commonwealth seems to me to be a society of men constituted only for the procuring, preserving, and advancing their own civil interests. Civil interests I call life, liberty, health, and indolency of body; and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like”⁽³²⁾.

Bellah further says that now one can read the great tenets of the civil religion in either of the two perspectives—as Winthrop would have read them, or as Locke would have read them. Is equality a condition for the fulfillment of our humanity in covenant with God or is it a condition for the competitive struggle to attain our own interests? Is freedom almost identical with virtue—the freedom to fulfill lovingly our obligations to God and our fellow men—or is it the right to do whatever we please so long as we do not harm our fellow men too flagrantly? Is the pursuit of happiness the realization of our true humanity in love of Being and all beings, as Jonathan Edwards⁽³³⁾ would have put it or is it, as Locke would contend, the pursuit of those things—notably wealth and power—which are means to future happiness, in Leo Strauss's words, “The joyless quest for joy”? Does life mean biological survival in our animal functions or does it mean the good life in which our spiritual nature and our animal nature are both fulfilled?⁽³⁴⁾

It would simplify matters if Christians had consistently followed what I am calling the biblical interpretation of our civil religion, and deists and rationalists had followed the utilitarian interpretation. Such was not, however,

the case. Not only have Christians been on both sides of the fence but we can find the same cleavage in the Enlightenment thought of the founding fathers. The stress on virtue that we have already noticed—Jefferson’s “love of others,” Franklin’s “zeal for the public good”—is very close to the biblical archetype, while the stress on self-interest that is also common among the founding fathers suggests the powerful influence of the utilitarian archetype⁽³⁵⁾.

Biblical or Conservative Civil Religion:

Robert Wuthnow writes:

“The civil religion to which we so blithely pay homage has become deeply divided. Like the fractured communities found in our churches, our civil religion no longer unites us around common ideals. Instead of giving voice to a clear image of who we should be, it has become a confusion of tongues. It speaks from competing traditions and offers partial visions of America’s future. Religious conservatives offer one version of our divine calling; religious liberals articulate one that is radically different”⁽³⁶⁾.

Wuthnow described the basic framework of the conservative and liberal forms of American civil religion. The conservative version posits that America is a chosen nation. On this interpretation, our form of government enjoys lasting legitimacy because it was designed by founding fathers sensitive to God’s leadership. While the framers omitted specific references to God in the Constitution, they made certain that the documents reflected biblical truths, such as the separation of powers which was intended as an auxiliary check on human sinfulness. As Francis Schaeffer, a popular evangelical author, asserted in *A Christian Manifesto*:

“These men truly understood what they were doing. They knew they were building on the Supreme Being who was the Creator, the final reality. These were brilliant men who knew exactly what they were doing”⁽³⁷⁾.

In 1953, Congress, under encouragement from President Dwight Eisenhower, sought to solidify the nation’s religious moorings by adding the words “under God” to the pledge of allegiance. A year later, it decreed the nation’s motto to be “One Nation Under God”⁽³⁸⁾.

Utilitarian or Liberal Civil Religion:

The liberal version of American civil religion is also linked to religious values, but in a different way. As Wuthnow points out, few spokespersons for the liberal version make explicit reference to the religious views of the founding fathers or suggest that the United States is God’s chosen nation. Indeed, the idea of one nation under God is rejected because all nations are considered to

have the equal concern and affection of God. Derek H. Davis says about this version:

“America's role in world affairs is perceived much differently in the liberal version of civil religion. The nation has a responsible role to play in the world not because it is a chosen people but because it is uniquely blessed with vast resources to be shared. Rather than focusing on issues of personal morality, liberal civil religion is likely to stress global issues such as human rights, nuclear disarmament, world hunger, and peace. The importance attached to these issues is generally not legitimated with reference to any particular secular mandate, but simply on the belief that these are matters of life and death. Nevertheless, religious faith is frequently the motivation for involvement, differentiating civil religion from purely secular or humanist beliefs. The cry of the Old Testament prophets for peace and justice is the authoritative directive for liberal civil religion. Liberal civil religionists typically show a greater concern than their conservative counterparts in seeking peace and justice. Feeding the world's poor is a central focus, as illustrated by liberal support for such organizations as Bread for the World, Lutheran World Relief, Catholic World Relief, and World Vision. And a recent survey by the American National Election Study indicated that liberal religious lobbies are more than twice as supportive of defense spending reductions as conservative religious lobbies”⁽³⁹⁾.

Robert Wuthnow says about this version of civil religion:

“The liberal version of American civil religion draws on a different set of religious values and portrays the nation in a very different light. Few spokespersons for the liberal version make explicit reference to the religious views of the founding fathers or suggest that America is God's chosen nation. Indeed, the idea of one nation under God is often rejected because of its particularistic connotations and, more generally, because of the way it has been interpreted by conservatives”⁽⁴⁰⁾.

The liberal view of civil religion focuses less on religion as such, and more on humanity in general. Robert Wuthnow says:

“In this view, America has a vital role to play in world affairs not because it is the home of a chosen people but because it has vast resources, has caused many of the problems currently facing the world, and simply as part of the community of nations has a responsibility to help alleviate the world's

problems. Rather than drawing attention to the distinctiveness of the Judeo-Christian tradition, liberal civil religion is much more likely to include arguments about basic human rights and common human problems. Issues like nuclear disarmament, human rights, world hunger, peace and justice receive special emphasis”⁽⁴¹⁾.

The problem of nuclear arms occupies an especially prominent place in liberal civil religion. Liberal clergy have so often taken the lead in seeking solutions to the arms race that the peace movement has come to be identified in many circles as a religious issue. Other issues in the liberal version of American civil religion include civil rights, international justice and ecology.

Objectives of Civil Religion:

Why Rousseau too much concerned with civil religion, Bellah tells us about it in the following lines:

“It is instructive to reflect on why Rousseau was concerned about civil religion, advocated it, and coined the term for it. No doubt part of the reason was to provide a substitute belief system for those whose faiths had been shattered by the forces of Enlightenment. But there is a more important reason. Civil religion was not to be just another religion; its purpose was precisely to harmonize religion and politics. Pagan religions had been so co-extensive with their political orders that ‘there was no way of converting a people but by enslaving them.’ Christianity, by projecting a ‘kingdom of the other world,’ changed all that. ‘Jesus came to establish on earth a spiritual kingdom, which, separating the religious from the political system, destroyed the unity of the State. [A] perpetual conflict of jurisdiction has resulted from this double power, which has rendered any good polity impossible in Christian States; and no one has ever succeeded in understanding whether he was bound to obey the ruler or the priest’. Authority, then, is the crux of the matter—more precisely, authority to set jurisdictional boundaries and invoke transcendental sanctions. For these twin problems Rousseau offers a single solution: civil religion. Civil religion is religious because it is necessary that citizens be disposed to ‘love their duties’, and it is civil because its sentiments are those of ‘sociability, without which it is impossible to be either a good citizen or a faithful subject’. Therefore, ‘the dogmas of civil religion ought to be simple, few in number, precisely fixed, and without explanation or comment. The existence of a powerful, wise, and benevolent

Divinity, who foresees and provides the life to come, the happiness of the just, the punishment of the wicked, the sanctity of the social contract and the laws: these are its positive dogmas. Its negative dogmas I would confine to one—intolerance', Rousseau's overall concern in *Social Contract* is to identify an effective but nondespotic government, a vehicle for expressing the general will. In the book's final part, he discusses several means for 'strengthening the constitution of the State', and it is in this context he introduces the notion of civil religion, an aid in governing. Clearly, by calling it 'civil', he intended it in some sense to be independent of the church, and, by calling it 'religion' he likewise intended it to be independent of the ruling regime"⁽⁴²⁾.

But there is a difference between Bellah's and Rousseau's concept of civil religion. Rousseau's civil religion has no transcendental reference point. The general will of the people is sovereign and stands under no "higher law." In this respect Rousseau's civil religion differs from that described by most interpreters of American civil religion in which the state stands under the judgment of a higher law.

Is CR a Secularization of Religion?

Revitalization of Secularism in Postmodern Age:

The term secularism itself is actually of very recent origin. It was coined in 1854 to express "a certain positive and ethical element which the terms 'infidel', 'skeptic', and 'atheist' do not express"⁽⁴³⁾

Secularization refers to the "diminishing social significance of religion." Berger contends that "secularization has occurred on three levels: societal, cultural, and individual. At the societal level, religious institutions no longer exercise substantial control or influence over the state or other important social institutions, such as education. Secularization involves the separation of other institutions from organized religion and religious ideas. To illustrate, we can point to the degree to which functions such as education, social welfare, and social control, once the responsibility of religious institutions, have become the responsibility of the liberal democratic state. In this sense, religious symbols and institutions have been relegated to a position in which their influence over the larger society has diminished. Patterns of secularization have also influenced various aspects of cultural life. As secularization precedes, the arts, literature, and philosophy less frequently draw on religious sources for inspiration"⁽⁴⁴⁾.

Berger further says that "the main cause of secularization is modernism. The western scientific and technical mood of the Enlightenment claimed that science knew better than religion. The attack took its toll.

Religion wasn't defeated but, henceforth, competed with other claims to truth. Science has proved to be a formidable adversary"⁽⁴⁵⁾.

But contrarily in civil religion, religious enthusiasm its religious symbols, and religious teachings are used in support of secular ideas and its socio-political institutions. We can say in other words, to legitimate, support, and justify various aspects of secular ideas and pattern of life is called civil religion. Secularism minimizes the role of religion in society but in civil religion, traditional religious teachings are legitimized in a society only for the justification of liberal and non-religious ideas and institutions. We can say, it is also a dimension of secularization which is a secularization of religion. Civil religion thus borrows from the sacred to give meaning to the secular.

In enlightenment period, two ideologies were developed. Although the western philosophers of these ideologies were agreed on one point that religion has no right to play any role in socio-economic-political structure of society. So science and modern philosophy took over and replaced religion.

First was that to perish the religion and religious ideas.

Second was that to see the religion as a social phenomenon.

On the basis of first ideology, U.S.S.R. was being into existence, because Karl Marx called the religion opium. So his followers perished the religion and religious ideas people in their country after revolution. But western countries did not follow this ideology, they considered religion only a personal matter of an individual. Due to the lack of religion and religious emotions, Russian society was collapse in 1989. Russian philosophers could not understand that elements of general religiosity to be necessary to the creation of a unified social order and religious doctrines are essential for society, because these doctrines develop enthusiasm and unite the people. Rousseau had all these things in his mind, so he developed the idea of civil religion. This viewpoint focuses on the power of religion to legitimize the liberal and democratic ideas.

From Rousseau to Bellah, civil religion or transcendent universal religion concept is consisting of one meaning which was religious nationalism. When Bellah reconsidered this idea in 1965, it was introduced in the background of American nationalism. Now it has another meaning which would be the secularization of traditional religion.

Civil religion is itself set against the backdrop of secularization in the West. We can say that in the postmodern age secularization theory now has failed. Roger O'Toole says same thing in the following words:

"Through the secularization thesis has fallen on hard time, no new paradigm has yet emerged to administer the coup de grace invoked and anticipated by its most vehement critics. Despite all the slings and arrows that assail it, the concept of

secularization persists in intriguing sociologists of religion and in dictating their subdisciplinary agenda. Paradoxically, the tenacity of the secularization thesis seems to be rivaled only by that of the phenomenon of religion itself. Roberson depicts a mutual politicization of religion and religionization of politics on an international scale, while Cipriani perceives a secular adoption of religious elements are appropriated. Lambert discerns the emergence, in a French village, of a privatized and secularized Catholicism (characterized as 'transcendental humanism') which is nonetheless capable of sacralizing area of public life. Said Amir Arjomand explores intellectuals' political conditioning of the contemporary Islamic religious revival and stresses the importance of modern political, organizational, and ideological elements in this puritanical espousal of all-embracing fundamentalism. In a number of contributions, empirical findings provide a basis for cogent criticism of the secularization thesis. Lambert suggests that secularization theory underestimates the limits of modern rationality as well as the adaptive and productive capacities of religion⁽⁴⁶⁾.

Global Theology and CR:

After the fall of U.S.S.R. 1989, the importance of religion as social phenomena has been considered. Now western philosophers want to compatible religions of the world with democracy, capitalism, and other secular ideas like human rights, freedom, etc. Euben⁽⁴⁷⁾ and Fukuyama⁽⁴⁸⁾ developed the idea of compatibility of traditional religions with secular democratic ideas. We can say it a secularization of religion. We can also say it Global Theology or Universal Religion. Global theology is a relatively new way of thinking. It is an attempt to understand the present global situation from the secular viewpoint. According to Global theology:

"We are now having to think of the totality of our earthly existence, and of its new, or newly discovered, limits. There is a limit to human interference with life on the globe, beyond which the globe begins to die. There is a limit to the accumulation of military defence, beyond which it becomes, paradoxically, a threat to our very existence. And there is a limit to the economic exploitation of other human beings, beyond which the global economy begins to founder and growth goes into reverse"⁽⁴⁹⁾

Global theology means to tend the religion from dogmas, self-purification of all the outer and inner defilements to humanitarian and worldly

issues like poverty, unemployment, environmental crisis human rights and family planning and other democratic and enlightenment values.

Civil religion or Global theology will be the part of universal civilization. So, these are interrelated concepts.

Universal Civilization and CR:

What is meant by universal civilization? Huntington says:

“The idea implies general the cultural coming together of humanity and the increasing acceptance of [Enlightenment] common values, beliefs, orientation, practices, and institutions by peoples throughout the world”⁽⁵⁰⁾.

He further says:

“The concept of a universal civilization is a distinctive product of Western civilization. In the nineteenth century the idea of ‘the white man’s burden’ helped justify the extension of Western political and economic domination over non-Western societies. At the end of twentieth century the concept of a universal civilization helps justify Western cultural dominance of other societies and the need for those societies to ape Western practices and institutions. Universalism is the ideology of the West for confrontations with non-Western cultures”⁽⁵¹⁾.

In this way, civil religion is a movement to secularize the traditional religions of world so that they might be compatible with the idea of universal civilization or enlightenment ideology. Tocqueville also did this work during enlightenment period, Tocqueville indicates in his discussion of Christianity that the alliance between Christianity and liberal democracy was much more fragile.

Conclusion:

Conor Cruise O’Brien argues in his book⁽⁵²⁾ that the American civil religion may be the major force working for the preservation of the Enlightenment, and with it democracy, in the world.

The Enlightenment secular tradition has even produced its own kind of generic public religion, a religion of the Republic, which Bellah has immortalized with the term civil religion. Historically, it is this common faith that supports the republic and tends to identify with its secular values. Civil religion has provided a sacred legitimation for capitalist and democratic system.

Although civil religion’s roots are found in Enlightenment period, but this idea has now developed in Muslim countries. After Enlightenment period, religion could not be relegated from society. So the western philosophers

developed the idea of civil religion to secularize the religious teachings or to use it for secular purposes.

If we use religious feelings for nationalism, in fact we borrow religious doctrines from any traditional religion. If we use it to unite and strength the modern society which is multicultural or plural society, it will also be called civil religion.

We have inferred from the above discussion that civil religion contains two aspects. Our further discussion will envisage these aspects of civil religion:

- ❖ Civil religion is to the “use” of traditional religion as an instrumentality for the attainment of national goals, as we shall discuss it in the coming chapters.
- ❖ Civil religion is a movement to secularize the traditional religions, so that they can be compatible with modern socio-political structure liberal democracy and enlightenment values, as we shall see it in detail in second part of this dissertation.

**Civil Religion → Global Theology or Universal Religion
or Secularization of Religion → Universal Civilization**

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