"Why do so many people find it difficult to believe today? Why do some young people seem indifferent and even hostile to faith? How can we proclaim the gospel in a secular age? If you are asking questions such as these, read *The Truth Will Make You Free*. Fr. Robert Leavitt explains how our secular society came about and how a new evangelization might address it. This is a book we have needed for a long time."

— Frank J. Matera
Professor Emeritus
The Catholic University of America

"This book is the most in-depth and erudite treatment of secularization and the new evangelization available. Fr. Robert F. Leavitt displays an incredible depth and breadth of knowledge as he analyzes the current state of affairs in the world and the role the new evangelization can play in it. He takes his cue from Vatican II's call to discern the 'signs of the times,' adds insights from the formidable Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, among others, and sets forth a comprehensive and perceptive analysis of religion in the secular age. Anyone concerned about the new evangelization—and why it is desperately needed—need look no further for a reliable guide."

— Ronald D. Witherup, PSS, former professor of sacred scripture,
superior general of the Sulpicians and the author of
Saint Paul and the New Evangelization

"Robert Leavitt provides an in-depth presentation of the Catholic church's 'missionary discipleship' by challenging its oft-stated rejection of the so-called secular world. Tracing major turning points in the history of Christian and cultural development, accompanied by analysis of philosophical traditions that recognize the healthy importance of 'options,' he suggests that our secular age is a sign of the times. As such, it can be a vehicle, not an obstacle, to the 'new evangelization,' the proclamation of the Gospel. Leavitt has given his contemporary Catholic readers every reason for joyful passion (*thymos*). This timely book shows us how this might be achieved."

— Francis J. Moloney, SDB
Catholic Theological College
University of Divinity, Melbourne
Victoria, Australia

"Drawing on his own expertise as a theologian and theological educator, Robert Leavitt has tackled an important and complex topic—the church's response to 'secularism.' After an initial burst of enthusiasm for engaging the world sparked by Vatican II, the church's leadership has tended to warn against the corrosive threat of secular values. Leavitt, however, argues that there have also been salutary effects from modern secularism, such as helping the church purify itself from its own fascination with secular power and prestige. An authentic evangelical spirit, driven by a passionate desire to give witness to the gospel, Leavitt argues, both challenges and learns from the values of the secular world. This is a book that requires careful thought on the part of the reader and one that can bring wisdom to religious and civic leaders who respect the role of religion as well as the requirements of living in a secular and pluralistic world."

— Donald Senior, CP
President Emeritus, Catholic Theological Union

"Fr. Robert Leavitt has written an invaluable and indispensable book. *The Truth Will Make You Free* explores the development and goals of the 'New Evangelization' in the face of the challenges of secularism and pluralism within our contemporary world. What is remarkable is the clarity of his exposition, his insights into diverse issues, and his advocacy for a constructive engagement of the church in proclaiming and living the Gospel today. If I had to recommend one book for students, seminarians, and priests, it would be this remarkable treatment."

— Francis Schüssler Fiorenza
Stillman Professor of Roman Catholic Theological Studies
Harvard Divinity School

"This is an important book because it casts a light on the link between the history and nature of the modern secular age and the most pressing issue for the future of the Church—the new evangelization. The secular age is here a new opportunity for faith. Highly recommended for a clearer understanding of the challenges for Christianity in our contemporary world."

— Massimo Faggioli
Professor of Historical Theology
Villanova University

The Truth Will Make You Free

The New Evangelization for a Secular Age

A STUDY IN DEVELOPMENT

Robert F. Leavitt, PSS

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If you continue in my word,
you will truly be my disciples;
and you will know the truth,
and the truth will make you free.
—John 8:31-32

To my former teachers, colleagues, students, and friends
at St. Mary's Seminary & University
Baltimore, Maryland

Ave, Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum,
Benedicta tu in mulieribus
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus

Contents

Acknowledgments

A theologian accumulates enough intellectual debts to others after fifty years of teaching, and it's not possible to itemize them, much less to pay them back. I feel obligated, nevertheless, to open this book by gratefully acknowledging a few of them.

I begin with the gratitude I feel for having both Raymond E. Brown, SS (1928–98), and Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) as teachers when I began my priesthood. At the same moment the Catholic Church was itself taking cognizance of the diverse challenges of the modern world, these figures found ways to reconcile the ancient and ever-new revelation of God with critical methods and philosophical reason. When an aged John Paul II presented the Pope Paul VI Award to Paul Ricoeur, the Holy Father graciously acknowledged what this extraordinary French Protestant philosopher had contributed to a contemporary Christian humanism. If there's a common language where Christian faith and the secular world might find ways to recognize each other, it will be forged, I believe, in humanistic philosophies capable of doing full justice to the truth of the human person.

The purpose of this book is to clarify the meaning(s) of secularization in relation to modern culture and faith. For the inspiration to attempt that, I have a special indebtedness to the thought of Daniel Bell (1919–2011) and Charles Taylor (1931–). Their analyses of the sources and meanings of secularization, different as they are, constitute two of the best in print. Charles Taylor's genealogy of modern self-identity in *Sources of the Self* and of secularization in *A Secular Age* suggested a way to weave an analysis of the new evangelization in its concerns with secularism with new forms of philosophical argumentation. I could name many others, but the four authors I've just mentioned outrank them all.

Closer to my spiritual and academic world, I must express an undying gratitude to the Society of St. Sulpice and to my friends and colleagues at St. Mary's Seminary & University for my education and continuing formation as a priest, theologian, and senior administrator. This study is a minor dividend on a considerable institutional investment in one priest. Without Howard P. Bleichner, PSS, I probably would not have encountered the writings of his former professor at Dartmouth College, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy. This brilliant and idiosyncratic émigré German historian possessed an extraordinary range of insights into the enduring truth of Christianity which anyone inclined to a non-religious worldview should take to heart. To the Rev. Msgr. David I. Fulton, Fisher Professor of Moral Theology and Director of Priest Programs in the Center for Continuing Formation at St. Mary's Seminary & University, I express gratitude for annual invitations to speak on the new evangelization and the secular age in his program for young pastors. A few years ago, I was invited by the late Robert L. Beloin to deliver a lecture on religion and secularization to faculty and students at the St. Thomas More Center and Chapel at Yale University. Posthumous thanks go to this intelligent and gracious priest for his hospitality to me.

When the time arrived to cease lecturing and devote myself to writing, my Sulpician colleague, Richard M. Gula, PSS, offered helpful and trenchant criticisms of early drafts of this book. Phillip J. Brown, PSS, read parts as well, suggesting ways to make my points stronger. To the president-rector of St. Mary's Seminary & University, Philip J. Brown, PSS, and to his immediate predecessor, Thomas R. Hurst, PSS, I express my continuing gratitude for the appointment to the France-Merrick University Chair in Theology and for the precious opportunity they extended to me to continue teaching theology to future priests.

Having served as professor of theology and president-rector of St. Mary's Seminary & University myself for nearly three decades, a period which coincides with the inauguration and maturation of the new evangelization movement in the church, I am acutely conscious of the many obligations I owe to very capable faculty, administrators, staff, and trustees at the seminary whose efforts brought such blessings to my alma mater during those years. To those seminarians and other students who sat in my classes as I was working out my ideas on faith in the secular age, I hope what I taught helped them cope

better with their own faith struggles on the way to the altar and later. In that connection, I am happy to name seminary trustee Dr. Paul R. McHugh, University Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, for encouraging me in this project and for delightful conversations about the book's topic with him and his lovely wife, Jean.

The close friendships I have formed with remarkable men and women in Baltimore over the course of a half-century of priestly ministry in that city have left an indelible mark of affection on my heart and soul. To the librarians in the Marion Burk Knott Library, who have never failed to offer me whatever assistance I needed, I express my sincere gratitude.

Finally, nothing like this study would have seen the light of day, despite the intellectual debts and spiritual blessings I've mentioned, much less of a desire to employ them for explaining in a new fashion the opportunities and obstacles of religious faith in a secular age, were it not for the interest and support of Hans Christoffersen of Liturgical Press. For his patience and the competency of the production editor, Stephanie Lancour, as well as the other staff at Liturgical Press, I express my respect and appreciation.

Chapter 1

The Nature of Our Problems

Why do teens quit attending church? Why do some declare themselves atheists out of the blue, or just fake being religious at confirmation and communion for the sake of their parents? Parishioners rightly turn to priests for answers. When parishioners ask me about these issues, they usually begin by telling me their children attended Catholic schools, had religious instruction, received all the sacraments, and were even once active in the faith. They are proud that their adult children have turned out to be loving parents, hardworking and often successful individuals. As a mitigating circumstance for missing Mass, they admit life is too busy now for families with two working parents or a single parent raising kids. I wait for them to tell me soccer schedules make church attendance hard in springtime. That's how weak the attachment to religious observance has become for ordinary, good Catholics.

In response to their question about lapsed practice, I attempt to put it in context. I want to say "secularization," as I will explain it in the book, but I don't, because they would mistake what I mean for a moral indictment. What I tell them is that religious practice is down across the board in America. In comparison with some Protestant churches, many Catholic parishes are doing rather well, soccer notwithstanding. Free evangelical churches in some places seem to be prospering. But, when all the figures are totaled on American religious practice, the only cohort standing with a significant increase in percentages in recent years is the cohort marking the choice in the census about religious affiliation, "No Religious Affiliation." Sociologists label these folks the "Nones." Presently, Nones count for almost

a quarter of the U.S. population.[1] They are heterogeneous. A very small percentage of Nones are outright atheists. Some Nones are agnostics or secularists. Other Nones fall into the diffuse category of spiritual seekers and searchers who have not yet landed on a religious or non-religious choice. They are keeping their options open. While America remains predominantly Christian, with the largest percentage of religiously affiliated being Roman Catholic (which does not mean they go to church at all), the country is becoming both religiously and irreligiously more pluralistic than ever. Will Herberg's classic from the 1950s, *Catholic, Protestant, Jew*, is hopelessly out of date.

The point I want to stress is that secularization is a two-way turnstile. It may take some out of religious faith only to release them to explore a tolerant agnosticism, to shop for something that feels religious in some vague sense without necessarily needing a god, a church, or a particular dogma. If we factor into this native religious pluralism, the new immigrants from Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and the Far East, many large American cities are a thriving metropolis of religious beliefs. America remains what it has been for two hundred years—a liberal democratic experiment in religious freedom characterized by diverse ethnicities, beliefs, and moral sensibilities. Today that freedom also means the freedom *not to believe*. And, many enthusiastic nonbelievers are not as shy about their secular nonbelief as Catholics—devout or indifferent—are about the faith that is in them. And, if Catholics only believe what seculars already believe, then what is the point of their religious practice at all?

The fact is that all belief now is somehow optional belief. The non-religious option has been gaining more ground with some Nones, but attachment to religion in America is still in our cultural DNA. The European path into non-religious secularism, unlike the optional belief cherished in America, is different. It is called *laïcisme* in France.

[1] See Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, with the assistance of Shaylyn Romney Garrett, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2010). The authors hold that American Christianity went through one "shock" and two "after-shocks" since the 1960s, largely over sexuality and politics. Religious identification shifted from strict doctrine to new cultural markers of identity such as ethnicity, gender, and political affiliation.

American secularism is unlike the European version. Hans Joas claims that for a secular age like ours, all faith is effectively "optional."[2] And, paradoxical as it seems, an optional religious faith, partly engendered by the Reformation and fostered by the secular age, whatever problems it holds for Catholic theology, has more going for it in psychological, social, and political terms than any conceivable version of enforced belief.

Even when Catholics you know stop attending the parish, you can bet some have joined another parish or possibly an evangelical megachurch. If some simply opt out of organized religion, they may have embraced transcendental meditation in a search for a higher mindfulness. A few have joined a fitness club of earnest fellow seekers for "the best body you ever had." In the secular age, all that feels vaguely spiritual if not traditionally religious. Secular seekers may not be seeking Jesus, but many are seeking more from life than money and a new car. Disappointment with your standard run-of-the-mill parish Catholicism may lead some Catholic seekers to a monastery and contemplative prayer. The 2017 Man Booker Prize winner George Saunders (*Lincoln in the Bardo*) was raised Catholic but is now a practicing Buddhist. Read his 2013 commencement address at Syracuse University on compassion. He and Pope Francis are on the same page. If you want more spirituality in your life, and you don't like how your own church is doing it, in America people are free to look elsewhere for something religious or do it themselves.

The pastoral entrepreneur can open a storefront church in Baltimore, Maryland, or build a mega-congregation in the county. In the land of opportunity, religion is another business. In France, that doesn't happen. Here, a "techy" money manager with a knack for talking and organization can build her own congregation. Certification by a seminary is okay, but that's optional too. You can buy an "officiant" who got ordained online for your wedding. The French, as it turns out, have a great word for such types—a *bricoleur*. In religion, a *bricoleur* is someone who cobbles together a church using the pastoral and liturgical spare parts of other churches. No bishop or judicatory heads get in the way. One can pick and choose all the accoutrements. Christianity, oddly enough, did something like that when the early church borrowed the Hebrew Scriptures as a preface

[2] Hans Joas, *Faith as an Option* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014).

to its own New Testament and retooled a Passover service for its own worship. Later, in the Roman imperial context, the birth of Jesus as the Son of God was celebrated on the pagan festival of the sun god, Sol Invictus—December 25.[3] Christianity itself is a *bricoleur*. Joseph Smith started Mormonism cobbling pieces of the Old Testament and the New Testament together in the Book of Mormon.

The zip codes of the contemporary urban/suburban parish life are more ecumenical, interreligious, and secular/non-religious than ever before. Upscale supermarkets today shelve the spices and cuisines of New Delhi, Tokyo, Tuscany, and Mexico City. The religious market is much the same. Secularization, in that sense, doesn't finish off religion, as some have supposed or wished; it pluralizes and metastasizes it in multiple ways. Those who blame the lack of religious practice among Catholics today solely on catechetical misadventures in the 1970s are not entirely wrong, but they always miss the larger point.

The New Evangelization: A Brief History

I will get into more of this in later chapters, but to start I want to offer a brief overview of the new evangelization. The immediate aftermath of Vatican II in America was marked, as older priests know, by many changes that upended the settled symbolic structures in "Baltimore Catechism Catholicism." Introducing the vernacular into a Latinized liturgy was always culturally risky. Upsetting settled customs in life or rituals does not go down easy. Today English is the custom for Mass and few think twice about it. The sixteen documents of Vatican II included farseeing if still immature trajectories for church life and ministry. Harmonizing the old church with the new trajectories, putting new wine in old wineskins, is not a magic trick; it takes a long time and some wineskins will burst.

It fell to an inveterate worrier, Paul VI, to implement the Vatican reforms while maintaining the ecclesial equilibrium they threatened

[3] Rémi Brague argues that the condemnation of the Marcionite heresy in the second century was a decisive hermeneutical event in early Christianity. By rejecting Marcion's claim that the Hebrew Scriptures were not divine revelation, the church put itself in a secondary position with reference to Judaism. See Rémi Brague, *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization*, trans. Samuel Lester (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine Press, 2002), 57ff.

to throw out of balance. He soon found himself under siege by his own rebellious and outspoken flock in public dissent from the magisterium over birth control. He was lobbied by the Traditionalists who exploited his misgivings. In addition to the changes introduced into church life by Vatican II, there was unprecedented moral and cultural ferment. The falcon could not hear the falconer.

It was in this unstable world that Paul VI called and then presided over a world synod of bishops on evangelization for the express purpose of calming the storm and orienting attention away from ecclesiastical changes and toward evangelization. "On Evangelization in the Modern World" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*), the relatively brief and schematic apostolic exhortation Pope Paul wrote based on that 1974 synod, was also the first universal mention by a pope of the phenomenon of secularism as a challenge in the post-conciliar period. In speeches Pope Paul delivered at the end of Vatican II and afterward he mentioned the challenge of secularism.

The technical formula, a "new evangelization" (*nueva evangelización*) did not come from the Holy See or from a pope but from a meeting of the Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM) at Puebla, Mexico. With this formula, Puebla attempted to summarize the array of responses necessary to meet the challenges of the churches across all cultures in the southern hemisphere of the Americas. Latin American Catholicism, need I say, extends nine thousand miles from the border of the United States and Mexico to Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of Argentina. It is still the largest bloc of Roman Catholics in the world whose *first* evangelization came in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by Spanish and Portuguese missionaries conveyed to Indian colonies by armadas and explorers in search of wealth and property. Widespread poverty, economic globalization, bishops too indentured to the upper classes, syncretistic religious cults mixed with Catholic rituals, and exported North American Pentecostal fundamentalism were just a few of the factors that led the church's pastors south of the border to call for this *new evangelization*.

It was John Paul II, however, who decided to turn this Latin American initiative into a motto for his own global apostolate. He invoked it first at the beginning of his pontificate in Poland (1979) and, a few years later, stressed it again on his apostolic visit to Port-au-Prince, Haiti (1983), where he spoke to the Latin American bishops themselves. Over and over, this extraordinary pope would refer to

the new evangelization as the overarching ambition of the post-conciliar church. It became the preeminent inspiration for the broad cultural transformation he worked and prayed would happen at the end of the second millennium. John Paul II aligned himself closely with the dominant themes of the human person and modern culture in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*). The human person was his transcultural anthropological reference point in moral teaching. As a council participant, the former Cardinal Karol Wojtyla felt so strongly about the issues involved that he had submitted an alternative schema for *Gaudium et Spes*. Later, with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's help, John Paul II developed a syllabus of concepts for the new evangelization in his many speeches, addresses, and encyclicals in which secularism and other ideologies of the modern order played a prominent role. He put a juridical and catechetical stamp on the new evangelization in the *New Code of Canon Law* (1983) and in the encyclopedic *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994). By the turn of the millennium, the seventy-nine-year-old pontiff had produced a substantial magisterial library on the new evangelization in which the critique of secularized culture played a major part. U.S. bishops, especially the late Cardinal Francis George of Chicago, echoed the pope's concerns by making secularism in America a primary moral target of the new evangelization. Moral righteousness, however, was in for a shock.

When American Airlines Flight 11 struck the north tower of the World Trade Center at 8:45 on the morning of September 11, 2001, and eighteen minutes later United Flight 175 flew into the south tower, the rhetoric against secularism started to come apart. The final words on the hijacked jets carrying religious and secular passengers to their deaths were a Muslim religious acclamation, *Allah 'Akbar* (God is great). What exactly motivated those Islamic fundamentalists to do that? And, what made them hate secular America so much? Roger Scruton's opinion will surprise you:

> When Mohamed Atta flew American Airlines Flight 11 into the north tower of the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001 he was certainly expressing his resentment towards everything symbolized by that building: the triumph of secular materialism, the success and prosperity of America, the tyranny of high finance and the hubris of the modern city. But he was also expressing a grudge against architectural modernism, which he had already voiced in his Master's dissertation

> for the university of Hamburg architecture school. The theme of that dissertation was the old city of Aleppo, damaged by Syrian President Hafez al-Assad in his merciless war of extermination against the Muslim Brotherhood, but damaged far more by the jerry-built skyscrapers that cancel the lines of the ancient streets, and rise high above the slim imploring fingers of the mosques. This junkyard modernism was, for Atta, a symbol of the impiety of the modern world, and of its brutal disregard for the Muslim city.[4]

The secular world, in the eyes of those religious terrorists, went beyond its moral faults. The secular order, for Atta and his fellow terrorists, made religion free and diminished it at the same time. When St. Patrick's Cathedral was built in 1815, its tower served in that context as a neo-Gothic symbol of the power of religious transcendence in Manhattan. Now the great cathedral is lost in a forest of steel and glass skyscrapers devoid of religious reference. An American Catholic tourist praying in the great church cannot comprehend Mohammed Atta's resentments. Osama Bin Laden weaponized one sect in Islam against the whole secular order of life.

The various ideologies criticized in the encyclicals of John Paul II, like materialism, consumerism, utilitarianism, scientism, and relativism, were working well in Manhattan. The *–ism* suffix tacked on to the secular carried little denotative value for most average Catholics. If they had known European religious history, they would have objected that the secular order came into existence in seventeenth-century Holland and England precisely to prevent what happened on 9/11—religiously motivated violence. The critique of the secular bandied about in sermons was shallow and moralistic. A more substantial account of its genesis was needed.

A second shock to anti-secular rhetoric in conservative Christianity, and for the church a far more serious one, came in January 2002. It was then that the *Boston Globe*'s "Spotlight" journalists began publishing stories (eventually six hundred articles) about the cardinal-archbishop of Boston having covered up the sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests. Catholic righteousness was forced to confront its own hypocrisies. Worse, the secular press discovered and reported on it. Secular

[4] Roger Scruton, *The Use of Pessimism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 144.

public institutions—the police and the courts—held the church accountable for crimes that bishops covered up. For twenty years prior to Boston, Catholic bishops and pastors had railed against the moral crimes of secularism and secular humanism. Now, it took secular institutions to bring Catholic bishops to justice, to defend the children bishops had sacrificed to preserve a false image. It was not long before stories of sexual abuse of minors and cover-ups in other countries came to light.

All of this came at the end of the second-longest pontificate in church history when John Paul II was disabled by Parkinson's disease. The church seemed at once shocked and paralyzed by all this. Responses adequate to the seriousness of the crimes were not forthcoming from the Vatican. The U.S. bishops, to their credit, attempted to respond in terms a secular society would understand—an independent extra-ecclesial investigation. As prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Ratzinger had a role in handling clergy abuse cases in the United States for the Holy See. Without shortchanging his concerns about secular relativism, Ratzinger began to qualify the polarization between religion and the secular some of his statements could be taken to foment. He admitted to real pathologies in religion that needed the critique of reason. After his election as pope in 2005, Benedict XVI directed the Pontifical Council for Culture to open a new dialogue with the secular world. He published an apostolic exhortation on divine revelation in which he asserted that there were some "dark passages" in the Scriptures with no moral or religious relevance for us today. No fundamentalist could possibly admit anything like that. The pope was proposing a dialogical dimension of the new evangelization that would include the secular intelligentsia, the referees of public values in the secular order. Mere denunciation was never enough.

Benedict XVI went further. Prior to the 2012 synod of the new evangelization, he delivered a video message on March 25, 2011, from the Vatican to the forecourt of the Cathedral de Notre-Dame in Paris.[5] The gathering was part of a "Courtyard of the Gentiles" dialogue he had encouraged two years earlier. At Notre-Dame, Christians and secular nonbelievers came together in the city of the French *philosophes*

[5] Speech of Benedict XVI to the Courtyard of the Gentiles in Paris, March 25, 2011.

and the *lumières* in an atmosphere of openness and respect. The event was sponsored by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Culture with the pope's blessing. In his brief video message, Benedict made six points that are important not only for the case I'm making here but for ordinary parish catechesis in the new evangelization as it relates to secularism. Some of those same mentalities represented at the 2011 Notre-Dame event are making intelligent parishioners wince at naïve attacks from the pulpit on the secular order. Pope Benedict underlined the following six points in his address:

1. There is an urgent need for a new encounter between believers and nonbelievers to make the whole world more free, just, peaceful, and happy than it is.
2. Everyone has a responsibility to build bridges between people of differing beliefs and convictions.
3. Reason in service to humanity must not be warped by narrow economic interests.
4. Religion cannot fear a secular outlook that is open, just, and respects consciences.
5. Fraternity is possible between people of opposing convictions without denying differences.
6. The symbol of a great Catholic cathedral that is still open at the center of the French Enlightenment in Paris is remarkable.

Think of this cathedral, the pope suggested, as a house of prayer where some address God by name and others sit in silence before an absent and nameless divinity. Whether we consider God to be a credible presence or an incredible intrusion on our humanity, the name cannot be banished from human discourse. The "Courtyard of the Gentiles" is a place within the schema of the new evangelization in a secular age. Parishes and dioceses should take up Benedict's challenges, now more than ever. The philosophical grounds for a new dialogue of faith and secular humanism had already been presented in the 1999 Gifford Lectures by Charles Taylor thoroughly worked out in *A Secular Age*. Many consider this book the most important philosophical work on religion and secularism in the past forty years.

In what would become the final major event of his seven-year pontificate, Benedict XVI presided over the Thirteenth General Assembly of the World Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith (October 7–28, 2012). A few months later, the eighty-year-old pontiff resigned the office of the papacy. Writing an apostolic exhortation on the synod was left to his successor who took the name of Francis. As the former Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, Argentina—this Jesuit pastor came from the culture where the *nueva evangelización* was first coined, largely in response to political and economic challenges in Latino societies and the failures of the hierarchy there to address them.

Francis's apostolic exhortation on the synod would alter evangelization rhetoric in one significant way. Even more than his predecessors, he would situate the secular challenges to the Gospel against the backdrop of the failures of individual Christians themselves and the resistance to necessary reform in the Vatican Curia. Coming in the aftermath of both the clergy abuse scandals and the disclosure of financial improprieties at the Vatican, the reform of some pastoral structures in the church became a major plank in the new evangelization for the pope. Some of his critics began to charge Francis with jeopardizing the dogmatic achievements of the previous two pontificates. Others claimed to detect the odor of Latino liberation theology in the pages of The Joy of the Gospel that deal with global capitalism's effects on the poor. One must give them this much. The pope's second encyclical, which dealt with our care for the environment of the natural world, *Laudato Si'*, will not boost oil stocks. Finally, a handful of the pope's more extreme critics took him to task for a footnote (no. 351) in the apostolic exhortation he wrote based on the world synod on marriage and the family, *Amoris Laetitia*. The footnote concerned the pastoral possibility of admitting divorced and remarried Catholics to reception of the Eucharist.[6]

In 2015, faith and secularism were again joined in another Courtyard of the Gentiles event (*Cortile dei gentili*) held in Rome. Captioned

[6] See Ross Douthat, *To Change the Church: Pope Francis and the Future of Catholicism* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2018). Douthat is a *New York Times* conservative columnist and convert to Catholicism who argues that footnote 351 in *Amoris Laetitia* introduces an ambiguity that constitutes a breach in the church's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage, which has its foundation in the clear teaching of Jesus on divorce.

"The Piazza and the Temple—A Dialogue with Charles Taylor," Taylor delivered the keynote address. The meeting was sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Culture under the presidency of Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi.[7] Concurrently, the Gregorian University held a conference about faith and secularism that featured Taylor in dialogue with philosophers and theologians from around the world.[8] The few pages on secularism in The Joy of the Gospel call for a historical and philosophical context to make sense of them. Charles Taylor has written a compelling and comprehensive narrative for it in *A Secular Age*.

Stages in the New Evangelization: A Synopsis

I will go into the development of the new evangelization concept in a later chapter, but let me present a convenient outline of key stages in its evolution, starting with Vatican II and ending with The Joy of the Gospel. In broad strokes, let me briefly summarize the major stages along the way when the church took up the challenge of secularism in the context of the new evangelization.

The Second Vatican Council did not use the word "secularism" in describing the modern world, but many of the cultural and moral issues treated in Gaudium et Spes relate to it.

Vatican II offered a precise and extraordinarily sympathetic interpretation of modern atheism in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (1965). It distinguished different types of atheism with the various motives inclining individuals to abandon belief in God. Words like "evangelization," "new evangelization,"

[7] See www.cultura.va. "The Piazza and the Temple—A Dialogue with Charles Taylor," March 6, 2015. See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007). A helpful introduction to Taylor's book can be found in James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014). For a comprehensive background on Taylor's philosophical thought, see Ruth Abbey, *Charles Taylor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000) and *Charles Taylor*, ed. Ruth Abbey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), which includes an essay by William E. Connolly, "Catholicism and Philosophy: A Nontheistic Appreciation," 166–86.

[8] See *Renewing the Church in a Secular Age: Holistic Dialogue and Kenotic Vision*, ed. Charles Taylor, José Casanova, George F. McLean, and Joao J. Vila-Cha (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2016).

Conclusion

The New Evangelization for a Secular Age

Spirituality and *Thymos*

The World Synod on the New Evangelization (2012) coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). In five decades, the Catholic Church had reformed much of its internal pastoral life while strengthening the case it made for the Gospel of Jesus Christ as that relates to moral values in life, family, peace, and social justice. The analysis of modernity given in *Gaudium et Spes* became the pastoral and theological framework for the church's sense of mission in the post-conciliar period. But the meaning of modernity itself was in flux. The pace of progress in the technical spheres of life provided, as they often do, a giddy sense of cultural élan, but in the background was the loss of meaning, trust, and community. Cultural neo-conservatives bemoaned the loss of moral roots in American life. Daniel Bell traced much of the worry to the end of an industrial economy and beginning of a new technological communications revolution, to exhausted ideologies and to the feeling of a nihilistic view of life's purposes which had its birthplace in the philosophy of Nietzsche. Writing in the late 1970s, Bell offered those looking for hope this much comfort. "We stand, I believe, with a clearing ahead of us. The exhaustion of Modernism, the aridity of Communist life, the tedium of the unrestrained self and the meaninglessness of the monolithic political chants all indicate that a long era is coming to a close. The theme of Modernism was the word beyond: beyond nature, beyond culture, beyond tragedy—that was where the self-infinitizing spirit was driving the radical self. We are now groping for a new vocabulary whose key word seems to be limits: a limit to growth, a limit to spoliation of environment, a limit

to arms, a limit to torture, a limit to *hubris*—can we extend the list? If we can, it is also one of the relevant portents of our time."[1] His argument on the future of religion was biblical in the sense that the Divine is what places limits on human freedom. But, after the death of God, only a storm of environmental, social, and economic crises could bring us to our senses. The "clash of civilizations"[2] has slowly edged toward "a world in disarray."[3] Beside the language of limits, there is also the anxious rhetoric of a possible apocalypse. Where should we turn for hope? The institutions of our political, economic, and social life in the West needed serious reform. The church itself has already embraced the arduous task of undertaking reform at the beginning of the 1960s.

Vatican Council II introduced the most far-reaching reforms in the Catholic Church since the Reformation and the Council of Trent (1545–1563). A century before Trent, Johannes Gutenberg produced the first Bible in movable type. Print technology would radically change the communicative conditions for Christianity from the sixteenth century forward. Luther published his famous "Ninety-Five Theses" (1517) on an early printing press. It took two weeks for them to circulate across Germany. Two months later, the text was being read all over Europe. The Lutheran Reformation was different from those eccentric medieval heretical movements that were suppressed by a local Inquisition. Print alone—modernization, if you will, in one of its earliest expressions—had changed the communicative conditions of an ancient faith and the nature of evangelization.

The church responded to this by invoking its authority. Forty years after Luther, the Council of Trent countered Gutenberg's printing press disseminating heresy with the church's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (*Index of Forbidden Books*, 1564). The Index was suppressed by the church in 1966 a year after Vatican II concluded. Evangelization by the censorship of books considered heretical became impossible.

New forms of Christian spirituality came to life in late medieval and post-Reformation Christianity. Two of the greatest were the ones

[1] Daniel Bell, "The Return of the Sacred? The Argument on the Future of Religion," in *The Winding Passage: Essays and Sociological Journeys 1960–1980* (Cambridge: Abt Associates, 1980), 353.

[2] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

[3] Richard Haass, *A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order* (New York: Penguin, 2017).

developed by the Jesuits and the Carmelites. The Carmelite mystic St. Teresa of Avila wrote great classics on the spiritual life. She also founded monasteries. The image of the soul in her *The Interior Castle* (1577) was modeled on the metaphor of seven mansions or stages in the spiritual life terminating in union with God. The post-Reformation contemplative was seeking a method of prayer which would bring her soul into the presence of God. Fifty years earlier, the *Spiritual Exercises* (1522–1524) of St. Ignatius Loyola were composed as a retreat program spread over twenty-eight to thirty days intended to engender in the participant who followed the recommended practices, prayers, and interior purifications a deeper awareness of God's will in one's life and a determination to follow Christ. It is, to speak in the language of the new evangelization, a "crash course" in missionary discipleship. These spiritualities, different as they are, were driven by a similar ardor for God and transformation. What I explained in the last chapter as "spiritedness" powered by thymotic desire is what these two religious geniuses had in abundance.

After Trent, Milanese Cardinal St. Charles Borromeo (1538–1584) created the first Catholic seminary in response to Trent's call for a reform of the clergy. That was a "spirited" gesture, as well, but in the sphere of pragmatic ecclesial imagination. He was not alone. Jean-Jacques Olier (1608–1657), *abbé* of the Church of St. Sulpice on the Left Bank in Paris, founded the so-called Sulpician method of priestly formation based on the idea of a *communauté éducatrice* (a formational community) of seminarians and priests living a common life in the seminary. For the Sulpicians, the necessary spiritual aptitude and theological competency as a priest had the best chance of success in the form of a living apprenticeship with priestly role models in a life of prayer, study, and pastoral experience.

Carmelite spirituality, Ignatian spirituality, and the French Oratory, despite their differences, brought to the church contemplative, educational, and formational spiritualities fed by diverse interests all powered by what psychiatrists and philosophers call *thymos*. In different ways, they were all missionary. The repressive *Index,* now suppressed, does not come close to telling the story of Counter-Reformation Catholicism.

In the manner of Trent, Vatican II initiated global reforms in the church because, like Trent, the world had changed radically. Pope John XXIII called the council praying for a "New Pentecost" for the church in the modern age. On the first Pentecost, the apostolic

community of disciples in Jerusalem were filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in tongues the different nations could understand. It was a miraculous spiritual, evangelical, and hermeneutical event. The ecumenical, interreligious, and secular world needed to experience something like that again. The ideal of Christendom, enshrined in the slogan "throne and altar," which had dominated the ecclesial imagination of Catholicism from Charlemagne in the eighth century until the collapse of the Hapsburg Dynasty (1558) and the Peace of Westphalia (1648), would linger, but not for long. At Vatican II, biblical theology and doctrinal principles, more fundamental to revelation and Catholic ecclesiology than juridical canons and protégé monarchies, established the foundations for the new evangelization.

The political scaffolding once considered providential for ecclesial mission in the world had been removed. The church began to realize, often painfully, that Jesus Christ did not send his disciples on mission to establish a theocracy. Yet, in a certain sense, that is what happened by accident of one emperor's conversion and the birth of what later was known as Christendom. In the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, the church confesses that Christ was "crucified under Pontius Pilate," an appointee of Tiberius Caesar to govern the Roman province of Judea. The Latin Christian apologist Lactantius would mark the military victory at Milvian Bridge in 312 of the first Christian emperor, Constantine, with the trope built on the ambiguity of the word "sign." He wrote, *in hoc signo vinces* ("in this sign you will conquer") because the hilt of Constantine's sword bore an uncanny resemblance to the cross of Christ. With the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century inter-Christian wars of religion, that trope became an unworthy conceit. For making that clear, one can thank Hugo Grotius and John Locke. The ideal of the nondenominational secular state began with their reflections on religious violence and civic peace.

In the same period of European history, the common noun "spirituality" (*spiritualité*) first began to be used in the seventeenth-century French Catholic tradition. The so-called "French School" of spirituality was born then. Like the nineteenth-century neologism of Charles Baudelaire, *modernité*, meant to characterize a radically new sensibility, *spiritualité* conveyed for French Catholics a distinctive religious self-consciousness. Today, the word spirituality covers the entire range of secular sensibilities in touch with different images of depth and meaning in human imagination, ranging from a deep attunement

to personal depths in the self to the unspoiled natural world to social justice and rights of minorities.

In Catholicism, there are many spiritualities with images and metaphors drawn from the biblical tradition and the ambient culture and resourced from the writings of great theologians, spiritual masters, and founders of religious communities—Benedictine, Dominican, Franciscan, Ignatian, Theresian, Salesian, the list goes on. In our Catholic modernity, figures like the Trappist monk Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker Movement, and the unbaptized French mystic Simone Weil, whose letters and essays were assembled in her spiritual masterpiece *Waiting for God*, capture the spiritual searching of a post-religious age.

Protestant spiritualities abound as well in modernity. From the meditative silence of Quakers to the ecstatic extroverted glossolalia ("tongues") in the Azuza Street Mission to the social gospel movements of the twentieth century, it offers a great diversity of expressions. Judaism has its Kabballah and Hasidic forms. Hindus may turn to Saivist (Siva) or Vaishnavist (Vishnu) in their spiritual practices. Buddhism even subdivides into Mahayana and Theravada types. Islam has Sufi mystics at one extreme and Al-Qaeda martyr-terrorists at the other.

From the perspective of average Sunday worshipers, such saintly figures and their followers constitute the "advanced placement" class for religious seekers and searchers and dwellers. These adepts sense something in the teachings, symbols, and rites of esoteric spirituality which is lost on the ken of much quotidian consciousness.

The New Evangelization and the Secular Age

At the beginning of the new evangelization, secularism and the secular view on life were isolated as one of the major factors inclining some people toward religious indifference, agnosticism, or even a practical atheistic view of life. It was a short step from there to moral corollaries. Evangelization became morally tactical. But, the larger strategic assessment and comprehensive narrative of the secular age had not yet been written. The church lacked a fuller philosophical phenomenology of the modern self and the secular age. It was only natural that *Evangelii Nuntiandi* would be read against the fundamentalist horizon of the culture wars in the United States. The sexual

revolution and the political debates over the right to abortion colored the responses of the church. In the aftermath of the 1968 encyclical of Paul VI on birth control (*Humanae Vitae*), the traditional image of Christianity as a religion overly-obsessed with violations of the sixth commandment was verified over and over as the sexual experimentation in society drove the culture war. Evangelization was fueled by the sense of resentment that American culture had been highjacked by the political left and by secular humanists. But, something much older in European and American culture associated with the birth of the idea of the secular order and the inventiveness of the denominational religious order was also at work. Moral relativism powered fundamentalism, and fundamentalism, like a low-pressure system in weather, powered relativism in turn. It was difficult to escape the moralistic interpretation of what Christian faith was all about. The new evangelization took the form of a catechetical recharge in the church, even a re-conversion of Catholics to the dogmatic and moral norms of their Catholicism. The hope was to reinvest Catholics in their faith by re-educating them about it. But, at that time, what Charles Taylor has articulated in his ideas about sources of the self, the conflicts of modernity, the modern social imaginary, and the secular age were not available. The problem of belief as such was not given a historical frame for the disturbing range of consequences of what was called secularism. While these ideas, by themselves, do not solve the pastoral problems which pastors are coping with, they do provide a rich vocabulary of sociological and philosophical categories with which to grasp our predicament as Christians in a secular age. The new evangelization movement, as I explained earlier in the book, was one movement in four papal iterations. Let me summarize them again as they related to secularism.

Stage 1. The Second Vatican Council did not use the word "secularism" in describing the modern world, though many of the cultural and moral issues it treated, especially in part 2 of *Gaudium et Spes*, relate to it. Paul VI first introduced the challenge of secularism in his closing speech at Vatican II. Later, in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) the pope identified secularism as a major challenge in evangelizing the modern world. Much more work needed to be done, of course, in sociology, philosophy, ethics, and spirituality in parsing the social etiology and significance of secularism. But this early association of secularism with the crises of faith and morals

after Vatican II became synonymous with evangelization for Catholicism as it was for Protestant Fundamentalism in the United States.

Stage 2. The new evangelization, properly so-called, began when the Latin American bishops coined the expression *nueva evangelización* in 1979 with the Puebla Document of CELAM. Its redaction of the changes would be as different as that culture and its challenges are different from those in North America or Europe. Shortly after his election as pope, John Paul II began to use the "new evangelization" image in speeches he delivered in Poland (1979) and Haiti (1983). For the next twenty years that expression would become the apostolic leitmotif of his pontificate. Everything he did and taught as pope was done to make the meaning and implications of the new evangelization plain to Catholics and to the world at large. When he died in 2005, he left a substantial body of papal literature on the meaning of it.

Stage 3. The first turning point in the church's assessment of secularism came at the 1985 Extraordinary World Synod of Bishops in celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the closing of Vatican Council II. Secularism became much darker and more menacing than what *Gaudium et Spes* called the "modern world." The final report of the synod even worried about a possible "secularization of the church." That view of the matter was reinforced in the pope's apostolic exhortation on the priesthood, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (I Will Give You Shepherds), in which secularism also played a major part as an obstacle to evangelization. The formation of future priests in seminaries accordingly began to focus on secularism as some critics then defined it along with the ideology of atheism and moral relativism. Very little of redeeming moral, political, and social value in the secular order of modern life was noted.

Stage 4. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) paid close attention to the strong links between the new evangelization and secularism developed at the Vatican. In the late 1980s, the USCCB chose the new evangelization as one of the top pastoral priorities for the United States. By 2012, the USCCB had developed a three-year strategic plan for the new evangelization, leaving bishops free to implement it locally as they saw fit. Gradually, theologians and commentators began to weigh in on the meaning of the new evangelization, which almost invariably included some critique of

secularism. That critique leaned heavily on what Cardinal Ratzinger and John Paul II had published on the subject. Cardinal Francis George, archbishop of Chicago, who possessed a Ph.D. in philosophy, became a chief spokesman among U.S. bishops for the dominant anti-secular interpretation of the new evangelization. That earned him the nickname of "the American Ratzinger." Papal encyclicals of John Paul II such as *Fides et Ratio* (Faith and Reason, 1998) and *Veritatis Splendor* (The Splendor of Truth, 1993) carefully parsed the philosophical systems of thought which challenged the church's idea of moral and religious truth.

Stage 5. The attacks on the United States that took place on September 11, 2001, when four domestic passenger planes were highjacked and converted into missiles, two of them targeted at the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in Manhattan, were essentially aimed at American secular society. Secularism was the "Great Satan," and it included American Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and Muslims. In 2002, when revelations of clergy abuse of minors and children and the diocesan cover-ups of that abuse became known, it was the secular press that made it known. Some Catholics felt the church was being unfairly targeted by seculars who despised its teachings. In 2004, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was lecturing on the same podium in Munich as Germany's leading secular philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, and remarking about pathologies in religion that secular reason had every right to critique. As Pope Benedict XVI, he chose to address the issue of religious violence in a lecture at Regensburg University but his imprudent reference to violence in Islam created a firestorm of criticism. Toward the end of the first decade of the new millennium, Benedict XVI returned from a visit to the Czech Republic to encourage the Pontifical Council for Culture to reach out in a new way to secular thought. The "Courtyard of the Gentiles" was launched in response to the pope's urgings. Perhaps, secular thinkers had something to teach the church not only about morality and the protection of children, but about religion itself in a secular age.

Stage 6. Pope Benedict XVI in 2010 formally established the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization which he charged with preparing the Thirteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme of "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith" to be held October 7–28,

2012. Pope Benedict presided over that synod and four months later, at age eighty, decided to retire as pope. His successor on the Chair of St. Peter was Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio from Buenos Aires, Argentina, who took the name Pope Francis. In the fall of 2013, Pope Francis published his apostolic exhortation on the recent synod under the title *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel). The diagnosis of secularism in the edition of the new evangelization written by Pope Francis casts as much suspicion on globalization, consumerism, and economic factors as it does on relativism and life issues. It had a pronounced social justice orientation most evident in its fourth chapter. The Vatican would subsequently call two more world synods of bishops following the one on the new evangelization. The Fourteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was on the theme "The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and the Contemporary World," the results of which were met with intense criticism by a small group of bishops and theologians. The exhortation was entitled *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love). The October 2018 Fifteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops announced the theme as "Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment." In light of the current crisis over the way Catholic bishops have managed reports about clergy sexual abuse and, in some cases, were abusers themselves, it will be interesting to see what kind of formal conclusions or propositions the participants in the synod will consider timely and urgent to pass along to the Holy Father. Abuse could just as easily incline the church to tip backward to a jurisprudence of religion than to an evangelical reform of it. How much of it do we attribute to the constitution of the clerical culture itself and how much to the permeation of religious sensibility by the culture of transgression?

These six stages summarize in some detail what I treated in the opening chapters of the book. They indicate two things. First, the need for a more comprehensive hermeneutic of the secular age to contextualize some of the moral and religious disturbances in society which, heretofore, had been isolated for criticism in a tactical way by the church. Evangelization under current conditions requires an interpretation of the "signs of the times" which place them in a much longer philosophical narrative. I have tried to show in the book what

advantages such an approach has over mere indictments. Second, the new evangelization needed to make good on the claim that it would be new in ardor, messages, and methods. Pope Francis has tried to do that more than his predecessors preoccupied, as they were, with doctrinal and moral errors. One method of the new evangelization was to reform the church itself. Deep internal reforms in the church after clergy abuse have become unavoidable, but they will depend on the correct diagnosis of what created the conditions for this crime at the time it happened and the conditions which favored its cover-up. Pope Francis rejuvenated the rhetoric of joy as a mode of interpreting what John Paul II spoke of as "ardor." The culture of religious indifference today is now additionally burdened with a cynicism about the church itself. The changes proposed in the church must not only be according to the Gospel and tradition read in light of it, but proportionate to the damage done to Christian faith by the abuse crisis. One of the matters I had addressed in the book was the church's resistance for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the idea of religious freedom. With the belated recognition by the church that religious freedom was not only essential to the secular democratic order, but integral to our own belief in human conscience, the concept of religious freedom became a shared if controversial linkage between the church and the secular moral order.

Religious Freedom without Resentment

When direct power over liberal democracy was removed from religious institutions, the sentiment of resentment became unavoidable for some of them. The long nineteenth century in the church was one reflection of it. Democratic liberalism was viewed by many as the archenemy of the faith. Today Catholic bishops in the United States appeal to the concept of religious liberty in defense of the church's right to dissent from secular moral worldviews.

To complete what was said earlier about its secular genesis and its late adoption into the official teaching of the church, let me briefly offer what Charles Taylor, Jocelyn Maclure, and Paul Ricoeur say about it. All agree that a post-secular, open, pluralistic, public sphere and state, one that is not demeaning of conscience, whether religious or secular, is needed. Jürgen Habermas holds the same opinion of the matter.

> Thus it is in the interest of the constitutional state to deal carefully with all the cultural sources that nourish its citizens' consciousness of norms and their solidarity. This awareness, which has become conservative, is reflected in the phrase: "postsecular society."
>
> This refers not only to the fact that religion is holding its own in an increasing secular environment and that society must assume that religious fellowships will continue to exist for the foreseeable future. The expression "postsecular" does more than give public recognition to religious fellowships in view of the functional contributions they make to the reproduction of motivations and attitudes that are societally desirable. The public awareness of a postsecular society also reflects a normative insight that has consequences for the political dealings of unbelieving citizens with believing citizens. In the postsecular society, there is an increasing consensus that certain phases of the "modernization of the public consciousness" involve the assimilation and the reflexive transformation of both religious and secular mentalities. If both sides agree to understand the secularization of society as a complementary learning process, then they will also have cognitive reasons to take seriously each other's contributions to controversial subjects in the public debate.[4]

Habermas not only means to grant religious citizens freedom of conscience, but also to admit, as part of an open secular outlook on values, in principle at least, that religious worldviews have something reasonable to say to secularism.

In 2011, Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor co-authored a small insightful piece of political philosophy on conscience and secularism entitled *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience* (originally written in French since the authors are both Canadians and specifically concerned about the debates about faith and secularism in Quebec Province). It treats such topics as moral pluralism and neutrality, the main principles of political secularism, secular political regimes, life in the public and private spheres, and religious symbols in public life. The argument in the book begins with a discussion of moral pluralism, state neutrality about worldviews, and secularism in the philosophical sense. Moral pluralism in free modern societies is the universe in

[4] Jürgen Habermas, "The Pre-political Foundation of the Democratic Constitutional State," in *Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 46–47.

which religious pluralism finds itself. Liberal states guarantee individuals the autonomy to decide for themselves what philosophical and moral worldviews they will hold and live by. Liberal states, by definition, grant freedom of conscience (each one may decide his or her own moral outlook) and freedom of religion (each one may believe and practice the religion of his or her choice). The state as such is obliged to remain neutral about worldviews and faiths. Deep moral convictions, whether religious or secular, are protected by the state's commitment to the individual's freedom of conscience and the state's acknowledged incompetency in such matters. In short, the state's neutrality about faith and morals is itself a new "moral ideal."

There is a limit to the state's neutrality, however. It cannot be neutral on a few core principles like human dignity, basic human rights, and popular sovereignty (democracy). These are not up for debate. They are axiomatic for a liberal democratic political system. If a society allows moral pluralism to exist in principle and if it protects it, the state cannot side with or force on conscience any religious or secular worldview. If it does so, it threatens to turn one or another group into "second-class citizens."[5] State neutrality is a "moral ideal" in liberal secularism, so states that declare themselves officially atheistic or theocratic have abandoned the secular ideal of moral neutrality.

Further on the authors raise the question of the "principles of secularism."[6] The principles are more fundamental than the ways and means by which a state ensures its moral neutrality. There are two major principles or aims in political secularism: (1) equality of respect and (2) freedom of conscience. These are always essential. The means or modes for realizing these essential aims are (1) separation of church and state and (2) state neutrality toward religions. There is often some confusion over the core principles of secularism and the different means for realizing them in any situation. Some principles underlying secularism are moral principles, like freedom of conscience, and other principles are only institutional arrangements, such as separation of church and state, to protect the deeper moral values involved. There are secular societies, like Britain and

[5] Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 13.

[6] Ibid., 19–26.

Denmark, that have established churches but still protect freedom of conscience.

There are two types of secular "regimes." Type 1 is republican (not the party), and rigid, such as we find in France. Type 2 is liberal, pluralist, and open. The first type really has other aims in mind than mere freedom of conscience. It controls religion in public life precisely to substitute secular values for the values religion once supplied in society. "Civic integration" is the overriding secular aim in that case; diversity is dangerous. In other words, there is a certain worldview interest involved. Complete neutrality is sacrificed for the hegemony of some possibly contested secular values for the sake of civic harmony. Religion is driven by such states into the private sphere because it is often socially divisive. The second type of secular regime is described by Maclure and Taylor as open, pluralist, and liberal, "whose function is to find the optimal balance between respect for moral equality and respect for freedom of conscience."[7] In other words, secularism is not a static doctrine but a work-in-progress, negotiating a balance between freedom of religion and equal respect for different worldviews.

Republican secularism confines the practice of religion to the private sphere of life, where it may nourish personal meanings and motivations but where it cannot challenge other public secular meanings designed to ensure "civic integration." The word "public" can be ambiguous. It may refer to the state itself (the "republic") or to what philosophers today call the "public sphere," a civic concept where opinions are freely held and expressed. "Public" can mean what the state officially endorses (schools, the lawn in front of the courthouse as well as the courtroom) or it may refer to public spaces like streets, sidewalks, malls, and stadiums. In the open version of secularism, neutrality about religious conceptions of the good life is obligatory for state institutions. Individual persons retain the right to their moral convictions. In the republican conception of secularism beliefs are to be observed in private and kept out of the civic public sphere. Maclure and Taylor consider this view of secularism "morally suspect."[8] It cannot help but treat religious citizens as second-class citizens.

[7] Ibid., 34.
[8] Ibid., 40.

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