American Civil Religion: The History and Evolution of a Sociological Concept

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AMERICAN CIVIL RELIGION: THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF A SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPT

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Civil religion, a term first used by Rousseau, refers to the religious dimension of the polity. Civil religion in American society, or American civil religion, has been the subject of an extensive field of literature generated by American philosophers, historians, theologians, social scientists, poets, and novelists since the inception of the nation. Stimulated by the work of Robert Bellah, the concept of American civil religion has recently generated interest among American sociologists, leading to a sociological debate on American civil religion. The debate is wide-ranging, beginning with disagreement about the definition of American civil religion and its existence in American society. Among sociologists who accept the assumption that American civil religion exists, there is still considerable controversy over the historical origin and continued development of American civil religion. There is also fierce debate raging on such issues as the structural differentiation of American civil religion from other social institutions and on the functions (if any) performed by American civil religion. The major objective of this study is to examine the social science literature on American civil religion in an attempt to order the literature into a coherent, comprehensive, and logical set of definitions.
and assumptions open to empirical examination. In order to arrive at a set of sociological propositions concerning American civil religion, the sociological literature will be highlighted and selectively reviewed, with representative studies examined as typical of a particular model of American civil religion. The purpose of this study is not to assemble a patchwork quilt comprised of every piece ever written about American civil religion. The purpose is to construct a representative theoretical map of the most significant American civil religion studies and to glean from these studies a set of propositions which would be testable by sociological methods.

Models of American Civil Religion

The first objective of this analysis, addressed in parts I and II, is to define the central concept of American civil religion. Much of the intellectual debate surrounding the concept of American civil religion is based upon a lack of consensus for a precise definition. Richey and Jones (1974:14) report "at least five broad, and to some extent interrelated meanings of civil religion" in the literature: folk religion, transcendent universal religion of the nation, religious nationalism, democratic faith, and Protestant civic piety. The five meanings of American civil religion can be seen as models, and will be used collectively as a device for ordering the literature. Because the five models are not mutually exclusive, some studies contain elements of
more than one model, but the majority of the studies can be usefully classified as representative of a particular model.

Folk Religion

Folk religion is a civil religion conceived of as emerging from the daily life experiences and expressions of the American populace. The major functions of civil religion according to the folk religion model are legitimation of cultural values and social integration. Alexis de Tocqueville's two-volume work, *Democracy in America* (1966), contains one of the first intellectual developments of American folk religion. During his contact with the American people in the 1830s, Tocqueville observed that a fusion of democratic and moral principles was expressed in the daily behavior and customs of Americans. Tocqueville's ensuing model of democratic, republican religion assumed that liberty, law, morality, and religious belief were symbiotically related in American society, serving as a basis for social cohesion. A classic sociological analysis of American folk religion is found in W. Lloyd Warner's (1961) examination of the Memorial Day celebrations in an American city. Warner's folk religion is a functioning set of civic rituals which are socially integrating and identity-reinforcing for citizens. A more controversial treatment of American civil religion as folk religion is presented by Will Herberg (1960). Herberg's folk religion is the deification of the American way of life, seen by Herberg as derived from, but standing above, the American
biblical religions of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism. Herberg's folk religion legitimates, integrates, and deifies American society, placing it in a self-transcendent position above traditional religion. The folk religion model is also represented by the work of religious historian Martin Marty (1959), who describes American folk religion as a religion-in-general lacking the theological content and prophetic force of denominational religions. Marty's portrayal of folk religion is echoed by Roy Eckhardt (1958) and Franklin Littell (1962) and typifies Andrew Greeley's (1972: 166) definition of folk religion as the religion of comfort, reassurance, and self-righteousness.

Transcendental Universal Religion of the Nation

The transcendent universal religion of the nation model portrays American civil religion as a set of transcendent ideals by which the society is both integrated and ultimately judged. Transcendent universal religion is capable of greater challenge to society than folk religion, due to its prophetic capacities. Religious historian Sidney Mead's (1963; 1975) "religion of the republic" is an example of the transcendent universal model of American civil religion. Mead's religion of the republic consists of a synthesis of democratic and deistic values which challenges both sectarianism and national self-transcendence. Mead traces the historical development of a transcendent American civil religion, which distinctly departs from the folk
religion model of American civil religion as a deification of the American way of life. In 1967 a sociological model of transcendent universal American civil religion was introduced by Robert Bellah. Using the method of systematic examination of presidential inaugural addresses, Bellah documented the existence and institutionalization of civil religion as an aspect of the American religious dimension. Bellah's model proposes that American civil religion exists as an institutionalized collection of sacred beliefs, providing cohesion and prophetic guidance through times of national crisis. Bellah cites examples of the unifying and prophetic manifestations of American civil religion throughout American history, noting that at times the symbols of American civil religion have also been misused for national self-reinforcement and self-transcendence (Bellah, 1975). The folk religion model is thus partially contained within the transcendent universal model, with folk religion representing the distortion of universal ideals into national public theology. Bellah believes, however, as does Mead, that the ideals of American civil religion have universal application which transcends American society (Richey and Jones, 1974:16). Greeley (1972:116) calls the transcendent universal model of American civil religion "elite" civil religion, representing the highest ideals of the nation. The transcendent universal model of American civil religion has stimulated the greatest amount of contemporary sociological response. Empirical tests of the transcendent universal model include
content analyses by Jolicoeur and Knowles (1978) and Thomas and Flippen (1972) and individual belief surveys by Wimberly (Wimberly et al., 1976; Wimberly, 1976). Of the four studies, only Thomas and Flippen failed to find support for a transcendent universal religion of the nation.

Religious Nationalism

The third model of American civil religion noted by Richey and Jones (1974:16) is religious nationalism. Religious nationalism represents a worldview wherein the nation itself is glorified and adored, becoming self-transcendent. The idolatrous component is highly manifest in the model of religious nationalism, as compared to the latent self-transcendence of the folk religion model. Like folk religion, religious nationalism also functions to reinforce cultural values and integrate citizens. Rousseau's original conception of civil religion comes close to being a model of religious nationalism. Social integration, rather than nationalism, was Rousseau's intended objective, but his state-sponsored civil belief system which would insure good citizenship and political legitimacy has nationalistic potential. There has been little systematic examination of religious nationalism as a distinct model of American civil religion. Religious nationalism has been conceived as the opposite type in the transcendent universal model (Bellah, 1975), or as folk religion taken to its most idolatrous extreme (Marty, 1959). Bellah is not unaware of the
manifestations of religious nationalism in the United States, but treats these phenomena as examples of the "broken covenant" between the nation and its transcendent authority (Bellah, 1975). Marty (1974) has developed a typology of American civil religion in which one type, priestly, self-transcendent civil religion, is presented as a form of religious nationalism. Although Bellah and Marty work from different models of American civil religion, both agree that there is a dynamic tension between transcendent and self-transcendent modes of American civil religion.

Democratic Faith

The democratic faith model of American civil religion is primarily represented in the writings of philosophers and theologians who have attempted to construct a humanistic philosophy based on the American ideals of justice, liberty, and equality. Democratic faith typically refers neither to a transcendent authority nor to a self-transcendent nation and is thus more a humanistic value system than a transcendent religion. The common faith of John Dewey is a classic example of democratic faith. Dewey's common faith was based on the conscious and dedicated pursuit of democracy. Dewey believed that this pursuit was religious, as any experience had religious values as long as it produced "a better, deeper, and enduring adjustment in life" (Dewey, 1934:14). Adjustment was not seen as a psychologically passive accommodation to society but was to be found in working for liberal
goals and building social institutions which would facilitate individual freedom. Devotion to building these institutions was Dewey's religion (Clebsch, 1973:176-177). Dewey's common faith best serves as an example of how the humanistic values of American civil religion could be embodied in the personal value system of an individual citizen. Because Dewey's common faith is more of an individual belief system than a cultural value system, the elaboration of common faith or the democratic faith model it illustrates is not treated further in this volume.

Protestant Civic Piety

Richey and Jones (1974:17) note that a particular model of American civil religion as Protestant civic piety is to be found among the writings of some Protestant theologians and American religious historians (e.g., Winthrop Hudson, 1970; H. Richard Niebuhr, 1959; John Smylie, 1963; Ernest Tuveson, 1968). The Protestant civic piety model emphasizes that the origin of American civil religion can be found in the fusion of the American and Protestant historical traditions. The Protestant civic piety model typically contains the following elements: (1) the theistic conception of a transcendent authority for the nation, (2) the legitimation of Protestant values as applied to national life, and (3) the integration of Protestant citizens as Americans. Charles Long (1974) has objected to the narrowness of the Protestant civic piety model, which tends to ignore the contributions of
non-whites and non-Protestants to the value system of American civil religion. Although Protestant civic piety is the least comprehensive of the five models of American civil religion and has generated the least sociological interest, the model will be explored in some detail in part I, chapter II of this study, as the concept of Protestant civic piety has historical importance for tracing the origins of American civil religion.

The five models of American civil religion differ (with partial overlapping) in their conceptions of (1) the definition of American civil religion, (2) the origins of American civil religion, (3) the relationship between American civil religion and other American institutions, (4) the functions performed by American civil religion, and (5) the current existence and future evolution of American civil religion. Due to the confusion created by varying models, there is a need for conceptual clarification in the field of American civil religion research and a further need for the generation of logical, testable propositions concerning American civil religion. Because the transcendent universal model of American civil religion is the most comprehensive of the five models and has received the most theoretical and empirical attention from contemporary sociologists, it will serve as the basic model from which definitions and assumptions are derived. Parts III and IV of this volume will explore four basic propositions concerning American civil religion, derived from the transcendent universal model of Bellah.
Specifically, the four propositions are adapted and condensed from John A. Coleman's (1970) evolutionary theory of civil religion, which is an outgrowth of Bellah's transcendent model of American civil religion. Coleman's definition of American civil religion is contained in the first proposition, while the remaining three propositions concern the functions and development of American civil religion and its relation to other social institutions.

**Basic Propositions**

**Proposition I**

American civil religion is the religious symbol system which relates the citizen's role and American society's place in space, time, and history to the conditions of ultimate existence and meaning.

**Proposition II**

American civil religion is structurally differentiated from both the political community and the religious community.

**Proposition III**

American civil religion performs specialized religious functions performed neither by church nor state.

**Proposition IV**

The differentiation of American civil religion from political and religious communities follows the general direction of cultural evolution.
The remainder of the study will continue the review of the American civil religion literature in a search for logical and empirical support for the stated propositions. The search consists of an inductive process by which the existing data concerning American civil religion are gathered, ordered, and formalized for the eventual purpose of being tested against new data. The result is a synthesis of American civil religion theory, testable by sociological methods.
PART I

THE INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF CIVIL RELIGION
CHAPTER II

THE FOUNDATIONS: ROUSSEAU AND DE TOCQUEVILLE

The term civil religion first appears in Rousseau's *The Social Contract*. The relationship between a society's religious and political ideals has been discussed throughout the history of social thought, but Rousseau provides the first description of a belief system explicitly labeled civil religion. Rousseau's civil religion emerges in the context of his larger interest in the legitimacy of the social bond. In a chapter entitled, "Of Civil Religion," added shortly before the publication of *The Social Contract*, Rousseau advocates a religion of civil virtue which would consecrate and legitimate common social life.

Rousseau arrives at the necessity for a civil religion after examining various ways that religion may function in relationship to the social order. Rousseau observes that throughout history political institutions have depended upon religious legitimacy. Primitive societies were often theocracies, and monarchs claimed divine inspiration to strengthen collective loyalty. But the power of religious institutions and the divisiveness of religious sectarianism have ultimately proven threatening to political stability. Rousseau examines and rejects three religious types which threaten the social order. The first is "the religion of man as man . . . without
temples, without altars, without rites . . . what may be called natural divine law" (Rousseau, 1960:300). This pure form of Christianity fails to bind the citizen to the state, teaching instead detachment from worldly affairs. Rousseau (1960:302-303) sees the true Christian destined for slavery under tyranny. The second type is the "religion of the citizen," the religious nationalism of primitive societies. This type of theocracy gives each nation its own exclusive deities. "Its dogmas, its rites, its forms of worship are all prescribed by law" and facilitate social cohesion. But because everything outside the society is judged "infidel, alien, and barbarous" it makes citizens "bloodthirsty and intolerant" (Rousseau, 1960:301). Theocratic nations are likely to become involved in self-destructive warfare. The third type of religion, the religion of the priest, is exemplified by modern separation of church and state. Church-state separation threatens social unity by giving citizens "two legislative orders, two rulers, two countries, imposes on the two contradictory systems of duty and makes it impossible for them to be at the same time devout individuals and good citizens" (Rousseau, 1960:301). In Rousseau's opinion, nothing could be worse than this dual, contradictory system which destroys social unity.

Rousseau concludes that social cohesion could best be served by the requirement that the political leader establish articles of a "purely civil" religion "not with the precision of religious dogmas, but treating them as a body of social
sentiments without which no man can be either a good citizen or a faithful subject" (Rousseau, 1960:305). The dogmas of civil faith were to be kept simple, including only the following ideas: the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, beneficent God; life after death; the reward of just behavior and the punishment of transgressions; and the sanctity of the social contract and the law. Civil intolerance would be prohibited, for in Rousseau's judgement intolerance leads to cleavage and the ultimate disruption of civil life. No citizen could be forced to believe in the dogmas of civil religion, but those who did not could be banished from the society, "not on grounds of impiety, but as lacking in social sense . . ." (Rousseau, 1960:306).

In the ideal society that Rousseau envisioned in The Social Contract, civil religion would serve a dual function. Established by and under a political ruler, civil religion would legitimize the political order without establishing a competing religious authority. The dualism of religion of the priests would be avoided. Civil religion's ban on intolerance would insure that divisive sectarianism would be avoided. Civil religion, conceived by Rousseau as a state-directed religion of good citizenship, would perform the social functions of insuring political legitimacy and social cohesion. Although Rousseau's civil religion proclaims a belief in an all-powerful God, there is no evidence of a prophetic function. In this final position, Rousseau's thought was congruent with that of his contemporaries Voltaire and Montesquieu,
who also believed that religion should be under the state, because some type of religion, however false, was required to maintain social order and morality (Cobban, 1934:78-79). Rousseau's civil religion is ultimately a form of self-transcendent, religious nationalism.

Alexis de Tocqueville's description of a "republican religion" in the nineteenth-century United States has been influential both for historians and sociologists of American civil religion. Tocqueville's view of civil religion differs significantly from that of his predecessor and countryman Rousseau. Rousseau arrived at his conception of civil religion by abstractly considering the requirements of the ideal society. Tocqueville discovered republican religion during an empirical examination of American life in the 1830s. Rousseau wrote of a civil religion established by the state, while Tocqueville observed a form of civil religion which emerged precisely in the situation of church-state separation that Rousseau believed would undermine social cohesion. Both Rousseau and Tocqueville were motivated by an interest in the role of religious ideals in the European political future. Tocqueville's reliance on the American case as a predictive type led him to be a forerunner of American historians and social scientists who would describe American civil religion as a folk religion of the American people (e.g., Marty, 1959; Herberg, 1960; Warner, 1961).

During Tocqueville's tour of America in 1831, he was impressed by the popularity of both religious values and democratic ideas.
On my arrival in the United States the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention; and the longer I stayed there, the more I perceived the great political consequences resulting from this new state of things (Tocqueville, Vol. I, 1966:308). Predisposed to see "the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom marching in opposite directions" (Tocqueville, Vol. I, 1966:308), as was the case in France, Tocqueville was challenged to seek further explanation of the surprising American situation. Focusing on the character and habits of the American populace and relying on interviews and observation, Tocqueville constructed a model of a democratic and republican Christianity which functioned as a nonsectarian folk religion. Republican religion is specifically the moral law which affects political life indirectly, but significantly, through its influence on customs and domestic life (Tocqueville, Vol. I, 1966:304). The various American religious denominations might disagree on specific matters of denominational doctrine, but could all agree on general Christian mores. Even American Catholics, whose specific beliefs diverged most strongly from the American Puritan heritage, adhered to republican religion so as to "constitute the most republican and most democratic class in the United States" (Tocqueville, Vol. I, 1966:300). Tocqueville concluded that the minority status of American Catholics gave them a vested interest in supporting republican religion's tenets of equality and freedom. Tocqueville's democratic and republican Christianity did not encompass Jewish Americans, but their
subsequent inclusion by Herberg (1960) under the generalized umbrella of American folk religion follows the lines of Tocqueville's logic for Cathologic inclusion.

Tocqueville presented a model of American civil religion in which religious belief and morality were fused with a political system of democratic values and laws. Such a fusion might generally imply the existence of a state church or a politically established belief system like that proposed by Rousseau. Instead, Tocqueville believed that the symbiotic relationship between American religious and political values was due particularly to the innovative American feature of legal nonestablishment. Tocqueville noted that religious toleration was first observed in the United States under the Catholic proprietorship of Maryland, which prior to the 1654 Puritan overthrow demonstrated more religious freedom than did any of the other colonies (Strout, 1973: xii). Ultimately, Puritanism solved the paradox of religious dogmatism versus political freedom through the institutionalization of legal nonestablishment. The separation of the denominations from political institutions left religion free to inform political decisions without being dependent upon the success or failure of a particular government.

In America religion is perhaps less powerful than it has been at certain periods and among certain nations; but its influence is more lasting. It restricts itself to its own resources, but of these none can deprive it; its circle is limited, but it pervades it and holds it under undisputed control (Tocqueville, Vol. I, 1966:312). When religion and politics are undifferentiated, religious
institutions become vulnerable to political limitations. "The alliance which religion contracts with political powers must needs be onerous to itself, since it does not require their assistance to live, and by giving them its assistance it may be exposed to decay" (Tocqueville, Vol. I, 1966:311). Tocqueville believed that the danger is particularly acute in democratic systems, which by their nature insure systems of leadership turnover and internal self-modification. Change is a predictable feature of democracies which could threaten the eternal values of a religious system. If religious values embody democratic principles, however, this threat is reduced.

Although religious values might not require political institutionalization for their persistence in society, differentiation of religious and political institutions could lead to internal value conflict. Rousseau suggested this consequence in his warning that church-state separation disrupted social cohesion by giving citizens contradictory systems of loyalties (Rousseau, 1960:301). Rousseau, however, was contrasting denominational religious institutions (which he called the "religious institutions of the priests") with political institutions. Tocqueville's republican religion was sufficiently nondenominational to act as a generalized belief system which could bind divisions of religious and political loyalties. In Tocqueville's model, republican religion performed a socially integrating function as a mechanism for preventing liberty from degenerating into anarchy.
Tocqueville observed that "liberty . . . is generally established with difficulty in the midst of storms; it is perfected by civil discord . . ." (Tocqueville, Vol. I, 1966:247). He believed that republican religion could function to prevent civil discord from destructively dividing the society.

By emphasizing the cohesive function of republican religion for American society, Tocqueville necessarily limited its prophetic potential. Republican religion was rooted in public opinion and could serve the conservative forces of the "tyranny of the majority." Tocqueville feared that the power of majority opinion in democracies would feel threatened by reform measures and would become unable to make "a strong and sudden effort to a higher purpose" (Tocqueville, Vol. II, 1966:236). Strout points to this issue as a contradiction in Tocqueville's model.

Tocqueville never recognized this implicit conflict in his theory. Similarly, he produced another paradox by his admiration both for vigorous intellectual freedom and a wide moral and philosophical consensus that could tame the majority's will. Religion favored the latter at the price of diminishing the former. . . . His fears about the tyranny of the majority were to some extent historically grounded in the very factor of popular religion that he identified instead of with influences favoring liberal democracy (Strout, 1973:340).

Republican religion by definition rested on a generalized moral consensus, but this consensus has functioned historically to provide both transcendent and self-transcendent interpretations of the American destiny. Conservative movements, such as the pro-slavery forces of the 1850s as well as reform movements like abolitionism, would use religion as
Tocqueville's model of republican religion was the first to describe a generalized democratic belief system, based in the religious and moral traditions of a society, which is observed to be structurally and functionally differentiated both from the political and religious institutions. Republican religion appears to have been derived from the American denominations but not to be delimited by any particular church or sect. Republican religion supported a democratic political system but did so indirectly by infusing the folkways and mores of citizens. Democracy and equality were thus political ideals with a religious dimension to be interpreted within the American historical tradition. Tocqueville hoped that republican religion could be generalizable to Europe, but he also recognized the singularity of the American experience (Tocqueville, Vol. I, 1966:329-330). Tocqueville's model of democratic and republican religion has thus had its greatest impact on American historical and social thought.
American religious historians have demonstrated considerable interest in the concept of American civil religion. In a review of civil religion literature, Phillip Hammond (1976:170) notes that Sydney E. Ahlstrom's 1,000-page volume, *A Religious History of the American People* (1972), focuses upon American civil religion as one of its major themes. Bedell, Sandon, and Wellborn's *Religion in America* (1975) also devotes considerable attention to the topic of American civil religion. Civil religion in America has additionally been a subject of special concern for a number of well-known American religious historians. H. Richard Niebuhr (1959) and Winthrop Hudson (1970) have concerned themselves with Protestant civic piety, locating the origin and boundaries of civil religion in the American Protestant tradition. Ernest Tuveson (1968) demonstrates the tendency of Protestant civic piety to become a type of religious nationalism under certain historical and social conditions. Sidney Mead (1963; 1975) has devoted a considerable portion of his career to documenting the concept of a transcendent universal civil religion of the American nation. Other religious historians such as Martin Marty
(1959; 1976) and Franklin Littell (1962) see American civil religion now becoming differentiated from its Protestant roots and developing into a generalized and secularized folk religion of the American people. Each of these differing but partially overlapping conceptions of civil religion among American religious historians has contributed significantly to the current status of American civil religion as a sociological construct.

**Protestant Civic Piety**

Richey and Jones (1974) note that a particular view of American civil religion as a form of Protestant civic piety is to be found among the writings of the following historians: Jerald C. Brauer (1965), William Clebsch (1968), Winthrop Hudson (1970), H. Richard Niebuhr (1959), James Smylie (1963), and Ernest Tuveson (1968). These religious historians have emphasized that the origins of American civil religion can be found in the fusion of American Protestantism and nationalism. The works of Hudson, Niebuhr, and Tuveson serve as representatives of the Protestant civic piety model.

**Winthrop Hudson**

In his "Introduction" to *Nationalism and Religion in America* (1970), Winthrop Hudson attributes the origin of American civil religion to Protestant civic piety. Using historical sources of data including sermons, inaugural addresses, and writings of theologians and politicians from 1640 to the
twentieth century, Hudson concludes that the American colonists were bound together by their common political and religious traditions. The common religious tradition was the puritan Protestantism of Great Britain and the predominate political belief was what Edmund Burke (quoted in Hudson, 1970:xxv) described as a "fierce spirit of liberty." The fusion of these traditions in America formed the basis for the new nation's civil religion.

Tracing the roots of American civil religion to British religious and political traditions, Hudson (1970:xxiii) notes that at the time of the American Revolution over 80 percent of the colonists claimed British heritage. To Hudson, this heritage implies the existence of a common set of religious beliefs. Although the American colonists represented various denominations, Hudson sees an overriding influence of British, Puritan Protestantism. Hudson (1970:xxiii) views the early American denominations as being divided only on "subordinate issues," not by the "fundamentals of faith." Later in America, prophets of the Great Awakening, such as Jonathan Edwards, would emphasize the unity of heart and basic brotherhood of God's people in the new nation. Hudson argues that the puzzling phenomenon of American nationalism which united the colonies during the Revolution sprang in part from the bonds of a shared faith originating in a common cultural heritage. "The outward interests of the colonists may have been diverse but they were made brothers by an inward common devotion to freedom, both civil and religious" (Hudson, 1970:xxiv).
The relationship between British Puritanism and democratic values is traced to Sir Edmund Coke's *Institutes of the Laws of England*, which emphasized the tradition of ancient Saxon and British liberty, continually threatened by the Normans. Hudson also cites the importance of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of Matters Most Special and Memorable* (known as the "Book of Martyrs"), which portrayed the British as the modern successors to the ancient Hebrews' special relationship with God as the chosen people. The relationship between Puritanism and civic values was most directly stated by Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell, who considered "religion" and "civil liberty" to be "the two greatest concerns that God hath in this world" (quoted in Hudson, 1970:xxviii). This fusion of Protestant and democratic beliefs was given greater life in the colonies. Some American colonists identified themselves with the Biblical Hebrews and saw their move to the new nation as an exodus. Hudson (1970:xxx) compares this exodus to the one made previously by the Saxon ancestors crossing the English Channel from the Continent to establish a tradition of liberty in a new land.

There are two assumptions critical to Hudson's description of American Protestant civic piety. He first assumes that British history embodied democratic values which were then expressed and experienced within the Puritan tradition. Second, Hudson assumes that the American colonists experienced sufficient British identification to try to build a new Britain in the new world. According to Hudson (1970:xxxi),
the American colonists believed that "the struggle to preserve their liberties was a struggle to preserve the liberties of Great Britain." The American Revolution was conducted against a tarnished England in order to reestablish its original ideals in the colonies. Both assumptions are supported by Hudson's historical data. Of interest to sociologists is the fact that Hudson describes an American civil religion derived from the values of a colonial culture which functioned as mechanisms for the social cohesion of the colonies.

Ernest Tuveson

Elements of Protestant civic piety may be found in Ernest Tuveson's (1968) study of the millennial role of America throughout history. According to Tuveson's historical analysis, during the Protestant Reformation Biblical scholars began to believe for the first time that the millennium was to be a utopia built on earth by Godly men (Tuveson, 1968:ix-x). America soon became the chosen nation of the chosen people who were to establish God's kingdom in the world. Once the nation was established by members of Protestant sects who literally viewed themselves as a millennial people, subsequent national history came also to be interpreted in millennial themes. Tuveson pinpoints two millennial themes which have alternated throughout American history. The dominant theme is (1) withdrawal from the world of evil, thereby setting a silent example for other nations. American
isolationism preceding each of the major World Wars exemplifies the withdrawal theme. The second and subordinate theme, (2) active messianism, could be inspired by the right situation. Manifest destiny, the Civil War, and the eventual involvement in the World Wars provided opportunities for active messianism to dominate (Tuveson, 1968:213-214). "The expansion of the nation, the Civil War, the entry into the Second World War—all would have occurred in the course of things. But millennialist ideas did influence national expectations about their outcome and results" (Tuveson, 1968:13). Tuveson's evidence of the influence of Protestant millennial motifs is drawn from the Bible, sermon texts, political speeches and nineteenth century popular magazines. Tuveson makes no effort to bring in data which might not support the millennial thesis, and no sociological data are used. Despite these limitations, Tuveson's study is an interesting historical account emphasizing the Calvinist foundations of Protestant civic piety which is neither wholly divinely transcendent nor totally nationally self-transcendent. Instead, there is a dialectic tension between prophetic ideals and their nationalistic application in specific historical situations.

H. Richard Niebuhr

A prophetic model of Protestant civic piety has been advanced by H. Richard Niebuhr (1959). Viewing American Protestantism as a social movement rather than as an institution,
Niebuhr traces the influence of Puritanism, Evangelicalism, and social gospelism on American civil beliefs. Niebuhr concurs with Hudson and Tuveson that American civil religion is based on the Protestant civic piety of the early colonists, but he challenges the idea that the Puritan settlers and their descendants hoped to establish an earthly kingdom of God in America. Niebuhr (1959:xii) stresses that the early Puritans and Quakers envisioned a kingdom of God based on the "sovereignty of God." To illustrate this hypothesis, Niebuhr (1959:174) quotes Lyman Beecher who identified the New England Puritan law and the subsequent laws of the republic with the moral law of God:

Our own republic in its constitution and laws is of heavenly origin. It was not borrowed from Greece or Rome, but from the Bible. . . . It was God that gave these elementary principles to our forefathers, as "the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day" for their guidance.

Niebuhr believes that it was the Evangelical movement in American Protestantism which undermined the prophetic function of American civil religion to emphasize the idea that American Christians are a specially favored and chosen nation. "Henceforth the kingdom of the Lord was a human possession" (Niebuhr, 1959:179) and the function of American civil religion moved from that of transcendence to national self-transcendence. Niebuhr credits the social gospel movement of the end of the nineteenth century with "institutionalizing" the concept of American self-transcendence.

As propagandists they (the social gospel reformers) sought the extension of democratic institutions—if necessary by recourse to military force—in order that all
the world might share in the blessings of the kingdom of God on earth (Niebuhr, 1959:184).

Niebuhr's concept of American civil religion is discussed entirely within the context of the boundaries of the Protestant movement. Niebuhr is exclusively concerned with the prophetic function of Protestant civic piety, its erosion, and the call for prophetic renewal. Niebuhr's description of the self-transcendent phase of Protestant civic piety corresponds to Tuveson's (1968) analysis of the tension between prophetic and nationalistic applications of American civil religion. Unlike Tuveson, Niebuhr recommends a return to the original, Puritan-based civil religion. "Apart from God and his forgiveness nationality and even Christianity particularized in a nation become destructive rather than creative" (Niebuhr, 1959:xvi).

Charles Long (1974:211-221) criticizes the historians who defined American civil religion in the Protestant, civic piety tradition. Long suggests that we consider the meaning of the words "American" and "religion" in the concept of American civil religion.

If by "American" we mean the Christian European immigrants and their progeny, then we have overlooked American Indians and American blacks. And if religion is defined as revealed Christianity and its institutions, we have again overlooked much of the religion of American blacks, Amerindians and the Jewish communities. . . . In short, a great deal of the writings and discussions of the topic of American religion has been consciously or unconsciously ideological, serving to enhance, justify and render sacred the history of European immigrants in this land (Long, 1974:212).
Long's main objection to the notion of American civil religion as Protestant civic piety is that the concept is narrow and contributes to the historical and cultural invisibility of certain American groups. As Richey and Jones (1974:12) note, Protestant civic piety is the least comprehensive of the five meanings of American civil religion. The concept of Protestant civic piety, as used by Hudson, Tuveson, and especially Niebuhr, refers only to Protestant beliefs about the role of the American nation rather than to a differentiated civil belief system available to all American citizens.

**Sidney Mead's Transcendent Universal Religion of the Nation**

Religious historian Sidney Mead (1963; 1975) challenges the thesis that American civil religion can be narrowly defined as Protestant civic piety. Mead documents an American civil religion based on a synthesis of deistic and democratic principles and characterized by a synergistic cosmopolitanism. Mead locates the origin of American civil religion in the Western European tradition by which emerging nations adapted the ideal of Christian universalism to their own nationalistic interests. The United States departed from the European pattern by separating church from state and refusing to establish any of the denominations. America became a nation based on the legitimacy of religious diversity (Mead, 1963). Clebsch (1968:209) also notes that American religious pluralism began as a historical accident which led to an
official policy of government religious neutrality. By accident, the colonies harbored groups of different faiths, each of which was required to interact tolerantly with the others in order to ensure its own survival. Far from diluting American religiosity, pluralism stimulated it. Clebsch (1968:209) cites Roger Williams as the father of "the distinctly American theory that unrestrained varieties of religious expression heighten the spiritual vigor of a single society."

Both Mead (1963:134) and Clebsch (1968:210) agree that early American pluralism was dominated by the Protestant tradition. Mead (1963:135) believes, however, that by the second half of the nineteenth century American had "two religions," the Protestant orthodoxy of the denominations and a "religion of the Republic." The latter was the civil religion of a democratic society.

This was rooted in the rationalism of the Enlightenment (to go no further back) and was articulated in terms of the destiny of America, under God, to be fulfilled by perfecting the democratic way of life for the example and betterment of all mankind (Mead, 1963:135).

Although Mead agrees that the two faiths were synergistically interrelated in American life, the tradition of religious pluralism prevented the religion of the Republic from being circumscribed by Protestant orthodoxy. Under a pluralistic system, no one denomination could claim to function as "the church." Mead (1975:71) contends that, from its inception, the United States itself began "assuming the traditional function of the church." Mead (1975:48) cites G. K. Chesterton's statement that the United States was the only nation founded
on a creed. The American creed was based on the Jeffersonian theory of equality and envisioned the United States as a new homeland for the world's homeless. According to John E. Smylie (quoted in Mead, 1975:72-73), "American Protestantism endowed the nation with churchly attributes, with three theological notes in particular." First, America became "the primary agent of God's meaningful activity in history." The beliefs that the millennium would begin in America and that it was America's role in history to evangelize the world both illustrate this religious function of the state. Mead also concurs with Smylie that in the United States it was the nation itself, not a religious denomination, which functioned as the primary social setting for the discovery of personal and group identity. Finally, "as the nation became the primary community for fulfilling historic purposes and realizing personal identity," it also began to assume "a churchly function in becoming the community of righteousness" (Smylie quoted in Mead, 1975:73). These functions could be, and sometimes were, performed in the interest of religious nationalism. The nation-as-church was always in danger of becoming heteronomous toward other nations and attempting to superimpose the American value system on the world. Mead believes, however, that the theological tradition of the religion of the Republic was essentially theonomic, or ruled by God. Historically, the social structure of American religious pluralism necessitated tolerance. The vitality of the religion of the Republic was derived from its toleration of
diversity, not from the establishment of one set of religious precepts. Generalized from a national to an international setting, the religion of the Republic pointed to universalistic values.

As the Christian sects carried the universal vision until it was, largely in spite of them, incarnated in a religiously pluralistic commonwealth, so perhaps that commonwealth is the bearer in history of the cosmopolitanism which, when and if incarnated in world institutions, may compel the nation-churches to live side by side in overt peace under law . . . (Mead, 1975:77).

Mead describes a religion of the American republic which emerged under the structure of religious pluralism. Only within a pluralistic system, in which no denomination could be established, could the nation itself begin to fulfill the traditional religious functions of providing a major source of social cohesion, personal meaning and identity, and prophecy for historical roles. Religious differentiation is described as producing a differentiated and highly generalized religion of the Republic, partially separate from the denominations but also standing over them to insure against the self-transcendent and particularistic tendencies of the individual denominations. On the pluralistic international scene, the values of American civil religion could perform similar religious function and serve as prophetic guidelines to world unity while guarding against the tendency of nationalism. Mead is exceptional among American religious historians for tracing American civil religion from its Protestant origins beyond Protestant particularism and self-deifying nationalism to potentially universalistic application. The
The key to this logical progression is Mead's focus upon the unique social form of American religious pluralism in the generation of a divinely transcendent American civil religion.

**The History of American Folk Religion:**

*Martin Marty*

In *The New Shape of American Religion* (1959), Martin Marty attempts to document the emergence of American civil religion as a fourth major American religion, independent and differentiated from Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism. Marty agrees with Mead (1963) that American civil religion was born in the natural religious beliefs of the nation's Protestant-deist founders, and has been nurtured by the American tradition of religious pluralism. Marty's position departs from that of Mead and also from that of the Protestant civic pietists in its evaluation of American civil religion as a religion-in-general which lacks the moral and theological rigor of denominational religion. Marty's (1959:2) American religion-in-general is a syncretistic belief system in which generalized religious sentiments have replaced particularistic theological content. Franklin Littell (1962:194-195) describes American religion-in-general as the "hearty and uncritical affirmation of everything American" typified by the popular mass media slogan, "Go to the Church of Your Choice, but GO TO CHURCH!" The God of religion-in-general, according to Marty (1959:34-39) is an understandable and manageable being who is comforting and "an American jolly good
fellow." The prophets of religion-in-general are popular American clergymen, such as the Rev. Billy Graham and Dr. Norman Vincent Peal, who have attracted cross-denominational support. Religion-in-general is described by Marty as a popular, highly generalized symbol system concerned with the religious aspects of being an American. Religion-in-general is portrayed as a type of American folk religion, serving a predominantly integrative function for American society.

Marty cites the erosion of American Protestantism as the main factor contributing to the rise of American folk religion. Protestant dominance declined in a religiously plural society that sought to tolerate and even integrate Roman Catholicism and Judaism. Along with Protestant "capitulation" to Catholics, Jews, and liberals, the American ecological trends toward urbanism and suburbanism hastened the decline of Protestant civic piety and the rise of religion-in-general (Marty, 1959:4-5). Marty is unclear about the specific impact of ecological trends upon American religion, implying that, because suburban Protestantism often lacks prophetic force, it has degenerated into religion-in-general. Marty (1959:45-66) also suggests that the rise of religion-in-general may simply be one of the many symptoms of the American cultural shift from inner-directedness to other-directedness. Marty concedes that the seeds of folk religion's vision of God as a benevolent, manageable deity were sown in the Protestant conception of covenant.
The winds of erosion first blew in the original adaptation of Calvinism to the American scene. . . . The federalist or covenantal idiom in Puritanism, which forced God to keep his half of the bargain, was the beginning of the effort to manage Him (Marty, 1959:4).

Once begun, the social transformation from Protestant civic piety to religion-in-general has continued to the point of dominating contemporary American religious life.

In a more recent statement, Marty (1974) has expanded his treatment of American civil religion to include four sub-types of civil religion. Marty delineates two basic types of civil religion, one divinely transcendent and the other nationally self-transcendent. The former, transcendent civil religion, "sees the nation 'under God,'" while the latter, self-transcendent civil religion, stresses national self-worship (Marty, 1974:144). Within each basic type of civil religion there are two styles of religious leadership. Civil religion may be either celebrative, affirmative, culture building, and therefore priestly, or "dialectical and judgemental" and therefore prophetic (Marty, 1974:145). Figure 1 summarizes Marty's typology.

Priestly transcendent civil religion is portrayed as a version of folk religion which received ritual expression through Dwight D. Eisenhower's personal style of fostering national cohesion during the cold war years. Eisenhower's statement that "America is the mightiest power which God has seen fit to put on his footstool" (quoted in Marty, 1974:147) exemplifies the concept of divine transcendence and aptly illustrates the integrative and affirmative qualities
### CENTRAL THEOLOGICAL AFFIRMATION

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Fig. 1. Types of American Civil Religion (Marty, 1974)
of the priestly style of American civil religion. Prophetic transcendent civil religion is demonstrated by Abraham Lincoln's prophetic role during the Civil War. Lincoln called upon those involved on both sides of the conflict to seek knowledge of and obedience to God's will.

Priestly self-transcendent civil religion is the type of American civil faith which most closely approximates the concept of religious nationalism. The nation replaces God as ultimate authority. An extreme example of priestly, self-transcendent American civil religion can be found in the John Birch Society's patriotic vision of America. But religious nationalism is not limited to political extremists. Marty cites Richard M. Nixon as a more moderate priestly influence. Analysis of Nixon's speeches reveals his tendency to use religious terminology to describe his personal vision of the nation. Marty (1974:152) notes that, although Nixon's speeches contained elements of both prophecy and idolatry, his predominant emphasis was upon "the promise of American life as a religious ultimate."

Although Richey and Jones (1974) see Sidney Mead as a major prophet of transcendent, universal civil religion, Marty portrays Mead as the prophet of prophetic self-transcendent civil religion. Marty (1974:154) observes that God often gets ignored in Mead's advocacy of a universalistic, world civil religion. Marty's evaluation of Mead is debatable (see Richey and Jones, 1974:15-16) and unless a stronger case can be built, prophetic, self-transcendent
civil religion is the weakest cell in Marty's typology. Marty concludes his analysis of types of American civil religion by suggesting the future possibility of a dynamic tension between the priestly and prophetic modes of civil religious expression.

Despite the inclusion of two divinely transcendent types of civil religion in Marty's (1974) typology of American civil religion, Marty is best known for his emphasis on the nationally self-transcendent types which typify American religion-in-general. Marty's view of American civil religion is that of an eroded, Protestant civic piety which has become the suburbanized, homogenized, and syncretic religion of the American public. The only positive function Marty attributes to religion-in-general is that of national integration, exemplified by the Eisenhower administration. Otherwise, American civil religion is portrayed by Marty as particularly corrosive to denominational Protestantism, deficient in providing alternative normative standards.

John A. Coleman (1970:75) has suggested that the alarm with which Protestant churchmen such as Marty view American civil religion is testimonial to its emergence as an autonomous religious system no longer under the sponsorship of organized religion.
Conclusion

American religious historians, through their research into the American religious tradition, were among the first to document the emergence of an American civil religion which overlapped with, but was also differentiated from, the denominations. For Hudson, Niebuhr, Tuveson, and the other Protestant civic pietists, America's civil religion was a nationalized version of Puritanism. The functions of Protestant civic piety were to foster cohesion by extending the Puritan covenant to the national level and to provide prophetic guidance to a new nation under God. But the United States did not remain a totally Puritan or even completely Protestant nation. Mead was the first religious historian to recognize fully the impact of religious pluralism on American civil religion. As the American religious structure became progressively differentiated and Protestant symbols became restricted in their applicability to the denominations, the symbols of American civil religion expanded to fill the void. Every American, Protestant or not, could potentially identify with the values of liberty and equality and believe in the divine guidance of a nation throughout history. And according to Mead, the unifying and prophetic value system found in American civil religion had international applicability. Other historians such as Marty, Littell, and Eckhardt were concerned that the emerging values of American civil religion constituted a watered-down version of Protestantism which competed with the denominations
in the field of religious meaning systems. In Marty's view, differentiation of religious structures has led to the generalization of civil religious values to the point where theological content is lost and national self-transcendence becomes the result. Marty, Mead, and the Protestant civic pietists agree on the existence of American civil religion and the manner of its emergence in American life but disagree profoundly on its present form, functions, and depth. This same debate is raging within contemporary sociology.
PART II

THE SOCIOLOGICAL TRADITION
CHAPTER IV

FOLK RELIGION

Some of the earliest sociological studies of American civil religion treated it as a folk religion emerging from the daily life experience and expressions of the American populace. According to Richey and Jones (1974:15), folk religion "emerges out of the ethos and history of the society" ultimately to become "an idolatrous faith competing with particularistic religions." Andrew Greeley (1972:173) defines folk religion as "the religion of comfort and reassurance; the religion of self-righteousness," which may be contrasted with American civil religion in its more noble, theoretical, "elite" form. For Greeley, the difference between folk and elite types of American civil religion is the difference between idolatry and prophecy.

W. Lloyd Warner

A classic sociological analysis of American civil religion is found in W. Lloyd Warner's (1961) examination of the Memorial Day celebrations of a Massachusetts city in the late 1930s. Warner's symbolic study of Memorial Day ceremonies is conducted within the theoretical framework of his larger unit of analysis, the "American symbol system." According to Warner (1961:17), symbol systems function to organize individual and collective memories and future
expectations in a way which strengthens and unifies the group. Symbol systems become sacred when they "reduce and help control the anxieties and fears felt by members of the species because of insecurity in the moral and natural environment" (Warner, 1961:11). Warner attributes the present diversity of American symbol systems, both sacred and secular, to the division of labor and complexity of the social structure. However, as American symbol systems become more differentiated, Warner notes an opposing phenomenon: the generalization and standardization of symbols used commonly by all members of the public. This generalization of American symbols is derived from the need to maintain societal cohesion on some level (Warner, 1961:14). Warner cites the ceremonial rituals of such American holidays as Thanksgiving, the Fourth of July, and Memorial Day as units of analysis of general symbol systems which have become sacred to Americans.

In "An American Sacred Ceremony," Warner (1974) does not use the term "American civil religion" nor does he describe a normative, civil religious system. Instead, he selects the celebration of Memorial Day as one "important occasion in the American ceremonial calendar" (Warner, 1974:90). It is Warner's thesis that Memorial Day ceremonies function as religious rituals to ease the individual's anxieties about death and to unify diverse segments of the community in a way in which competing, particularistic religious organizations are unable to accomplish this. Memorial Day is examined as "a cult of the dead which organizes and
integrates various faiths and national class groups into a sacred unity" (Warner, 1974:91). The basic symbolic themes of Memorial Day are the sacrifice of the soldier's life for his country and the obligation of the living also to sacrifice for the good of the society. The theme of individual sacrifice is symbolized in various rituals including the wearing of blood-red poppies and the participation in public parades to the cemeteries where the war dead are buried. Warner (1974:97) stresses the unifying function of these folk rituals.

Here we see people who are Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and Greek Orthodox involved in a common ritual in a graveyard with their common dead. Their sense of separateness was present and expressed in the different ceremonies, but the parade and the unity gained by doing everything at one time emphasized the oneness of the total group. Each ritual also stressed the fact that the war was an experience where everyone sacrificed and some died, not as members of a separate group, but as citizens of a whole community.

Rather than positing an ideal system of American civil religion, Warner takes his data from the life of the American folk. The indicators of Warner's folk religion are functioning sets of civic rituals which are socially integrating and identity-reinforcing. This "ceremonial model" of American civil religion has been critiqued by historian John F. Wilson (1974) for including too extensive a range of phenomena as indicators of American civil religion. Wilson concludes that Warner fails to differentiate criteria for civil religious symbolism from other forms of cultural symbolic behavior. "If civil religion is viewed as coterminal with
all rites and beliefs it truly is generic religion and is not specifically useful in differentiating the set of rites and beliefs primarily concerned with civic polity" (Wilson, 1974: 126). Warner's greatest contribution to the study of American civil religion was the suggestion that a broad range of potential indicators of American civil religion may be found in public ritual. Subsequently, scholars such as Wilson would legitimately call for evidence of greater differentiation between American civil religion and other cultural symbol systems.

Conrad Cherry is one contemporary sociologist who has been inspired by Warner's symbolic analysis of American civil religion. Cherry (1970:304) defines American civil religion as the "distinctively religious tradition which draws upon American history for its revelatory events and personages, treats official documents . . . as sacred scriptures and embodies itself in American civic institutions." In "American Sacred Ceremonies" (1970), Cherry explores three historical examples of ceremonial occasions which served the ritual expression of American civil religion: the funerals of national founders Thomas Jefferson and John Adams in 1826, and the funeral of Robert F. Kennedy in 1968. The three events are examples of what Warner called national "cults of the dead" in which the living and dead are united, the living are also united together, and all members of the society are united with God and his purpose for the nation (Warner, 1974:109). Cherry notes that the Kennedy funeral had a special potential
for national unity due to the presence of millions of citizens via television. Although the Kennedy funeral displayed the particularistic religious symbols of Roman Catholicism, the symbols of American civil religion were also in evidence. Cherry (1970:307) selects the eulogy offered by Archbishop Terence J. Cooke as the part of the service richest in civil religious symbolism. The eulogy emphasized Kennedy's role in furthering the American dream and called upon his successors to fulfill the dream of freedom and opportunity for all. Citizens could feel united with Kennedy's vision, one another, and God's purpose for America if they would take up Kennedy's task of building a greater nation.

Warner stressed the unifying functions of national sacred symbol systems. Cherry is cognizant of the potential for both unity and divisiveness in American civil religious symbolism.

... American sacred ceremonies invoke the archetypal themes and myths that have continuous popular appeal to the American people. A comparative historical study of the themes and myths in their cultic context would reveal both the unifying and the divisive functions of the American mythology (Cherry, 1970:308).

Cherry believes that the funerals of Jefferson and Adams were able to transcend political divisions and unify a young nation in 1826. Robert Kennedy's funeral in 1968 found the nation sufficiently pluralistic to defy complete cohesion. Although many citizens experienced a sense of gathering to a common purpose in their pledges to renew the values which Kennedy exemplified, others saw his violent death as a sign
that justice, peace, and freedom would never become truly
realized in American daily life. Cherry concludes that the
divisive function of American sacred ceremonies suggests
that American civil religion is not a monolithic entity but
a "national religious point of view" composed of different
"sects" divided along regional, ethnic, class, and ideological
lines (Cherry, 1970:309-310). The Memorial Day cere­
monies which Warner observed unifying a small city in the
1930s could have failed to unite a larger metropolis in the
1970s. Such ceremonies might even have divided segments of
the population during the American involvement in the Viet­
namese war, when the symbol of individual sacrifice for the
nation was not universally valued, especially by the young.

By suggesting the sub-differentiation of civil religious
symbol systems, Cherry makes a point relevant to Wilson's
concern that civil religion symbols are so general as to be
virtually indistinguishable from other cultural symbols.
Cherry agrees that American civil religious symbolism is of­
ten so highly generalized as to lack clarity. "Words such
as freedom, democracy, providence, and (especially) God which
recur in the celebrations of the national faith seem to lack
uniform meaning for contemporary Americans" (Cherry, 1971:
18). Cherry does not specifically connect the increasing am­
biguity of American civil religious symbols to the increas­
ing differentiation of American life. However, Parsons's
(1971:26-27) thesis that increased structural differentia­
tion is accompanied by increased value generalization
supports Cherry's independent observations of the increasing loss of clarity and specificity of these same symbols.

Cherry's observations of the Jefferson, Adams, and Kennedy funerals do not entirely support the concept of civil religion as folk religion. Although Cherry's method of analysis begins with the ritual expressions of the American folk, his conclusions partially challenge the idea that a set of national folk symbols exists which can unify the American populace. Cherry also challenges the assumption of the folk religion concept that American civil religion is ultimately banal and idolatrous. Cherry observes that the ritual expression of American civil religion has been nationally self-transcendent at times, but at other times as in Archbishop Cooke's eulogy of Robert Kennedy, it has stressed the divinely transcendent theme of American destiny under God.

Will Herberg

Possibly the best-known description of American civil religion as folk religion has been presented by Will Herberg (1960; 1974). Like Warner, Herberg does not begin his analysis with a normative definition of American civil religion, but concludes instead, from the results of popular polls and opinion surveys of the 1950s, that there is "an organic structure of ideas, values and beliefs that constitutes a faith common to Americans and is generally operative in their lives" (Herberg, 1974:77). The particular ideas, values,
and beliefs of American civil religion are democratism, humanitarianism, idealism, optimism, egalitarianism, moralism, inner-directedness, individualism, and free enterprise (Herberg, 1960:76-90). These symbols, which represent "the American Way of Life," function as a common American religious symbol system in the manner outlined by Robin Williams. According to Williams (1952:312), all functioning societies possess a common religion whose symbols provide an overarching sense of cohesion even in the face of internal conflict. According to Herberg, it is the American Way of Life which gives a pluralistic America this overarching basis of unity.

Herberg agrees with other analysts of American civil religion, such as Mead and Clebsch, that it is the structural differentiation of American society which contributes directly to the emergence of American civil religion. Herberg explores two sources of differentiation: religious pluralism and ethnic pluralism. For Herberg, the history of the emergence of American civil religion is the history of the American immigrant experience and the adaptation of each immigrant group to the American way of life. Herberg selects religion as the only identifying characteristic immigrants were not expected to give up in order to become good Americans. It was permissible for the assimilating immigrant to retain his religion, in part because of the tradition of religious pluralism, but also because the predominant religions, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism, were simply three different representations of similar religious
symbols: the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of mankind, and the dignity of the individual. Herberg concludes that protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism are three major branches of "American Religion" and that identification with one of these branches is necessary for one's acceptance by American society (Herberg, 1960:38-39). The renewal of religious interest observed during the 1950s in America could be interpreted as a reflection of the social need to identify with a community, with community becoming increasingly identified in religious terms as ethnic bases of identification declined. Herberg concluded that the religious revival of the 1950s was compatible with secularism, as one of the changes which had contributed to secularism—namely, the assimilation of ethnic groups—also contributed to the need for identification within a religious community (Herberg, 1960:41). According to Herberg, American religion as a syncretic blend of Puritanism and Americanism first emerged in the mid-nineteenth century and later became an "unembarrassed religionization of the American Way" as the ethnic churches dissolved into the more generalized traditions of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism to become mere branches of American religion (Herberg, 1974:84). In this evolutionary scheme, immigration and assimilation are the major independent variables which contributed to the rise of American religion as a unifier of differentiated groups.

Herberg stressed that despite the cohesive function of American religion it is not a common denominator religion
synthesized from the religious symbols of the biblical religions. American religion is a true folk religion, an "organic structure" of norms, values, and beliefs which can be observed actually functioning in the daily social life of the American people (Herberg, 1974:76-77). Although American religion is neither sponsored by nor dominated by other religious organizations, there is little conflict between American civil religion and the American denominations. The only sources of tension observed between American religion and other religious organizations are to be found among the still-remaining ethnic churches, a few sects such as the Jehovah's Witnesses who oppose some manifestations of American civil religion such as the pledge of allegiance to the American flag, and a small group of critical theologians with views similar to those of Martin Marty. With these exceptions, the relationship between American civil religion and the biblical religions in America is harmonious, due to the fact that American civil religion is not perceived as a separate competing religion by its American adherents (Herberg, 1974:85).

The indicators of American civil religion cited by Herberg are the American symbol systems noted by Warner (1961). Herberg locates evidence of American civil religion in the apotheosis of national life, the religionization of national values, the divinization of national heroes such as Washington and Lincoln, and the transmutation of American history into a redemptive history (Herberg, 1974:78). The spiritual
aspect of American civil religion is evidenced by the near-unanimous American belief in a "supreme being" and the tendency of Americans to see national history and endeavors as "moral crusades overseen by God." As symbolic evidence, Herberg describes the Great Seal of the United States which depicts an unfinished pyramid "representing the American national enterprise, and over it the all-seeing eye of God" (Herberg, 1974:80). This image suggests a prophetic dimension of American civil religion, but Herberg cautions that the structure of American religion as overarching the traditional biblical religion leads ultimately to a self-transcendent position.

... America's civil religion is not, and cannot be seen as, authentic Christianity, or Judaism, or even a special cultural version of either or both. Because they serve a jealous God, these biblical faiths cannot allow any claim of ultimacy or absoluteness ... short of God. ... To see America's civil religion as somehow standing above or beyond the biblical religions, ... as somehow including them and finding a place for them in its overarching unity, is idolatry, however innocently held and whatever may be the subjective intentions of believers (Herberg, 1974:87).

Herberg portrays American civil religion as a genuine folk religion. The symbols of American culture and American civil religion are not differentiated because American civil religion is the American culture religionized. Herberg has no problem viewing American folk religion as a genuine civil religion, and points to Athenian and Roman civil religion as ancient examples of the congruency between a society's civil religion and its culture. Herberg's folk religion functions primarily as a mechanism for the pattern-maintenance of
American culture and the integration of American society. Andrew Greeley (1972:163), in an evaluation of Herberg's American folk religion, observes that "not since Emile Durkheim has anyone so astutely described the social-integration dimension in a religion." Yet Greeley questions Herberg's conclusion that the prophetic dimension found in biblical religion is absent from American civil religion. Greeley acknowledges that the prophetic function is lacking in American civil religion in its popular folk religion form. American civil religion as folk religion comforts, reassures, and celebrates conformity. However, Greeley believes there is another "elite" form of American civil religion based on the American values of the right to dissent. According to Greeley, the tradition of dissent has at times produced forces to counteract the self-transcendent tendencies of folk religion. For example, American clergymen who have protested war or racial injustice have done so not only from the perspective of their biblical traditions, but also from the tradition of dissent embedded in American civil religion (Greeley, 1972:167).

Conclusion

The concept of American folk religion, which was developed in the historical analyses of Marty, Littell, and Eckhardt, has been elaborated by the sociological analyses of Warner and Herberg. As social scientists attempting objective analyses, neither Warner nor Herberg was burdened with
a need to warn the public of the dangers of folk religion. As Greeley (1972:165) notes in comparing the sociological to the historical treatments of American civil religion, "while Herberg's analysis is astute, the reader in the 1970s may be inclined to find both Marty and Eckhardt to be irritable and irritating." The major contributions of Warner are the location of American civil religion in the national symbol systems and ritual celebrations of the American public and the recognition that such symbols and ritual behaviors perform the religious function of uniting believers in a moral community. Herberg built upon this premise to explore his thesis that folk religion had replaced the American biblical religions as the major unifying force in American society. Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism had become religious sub-structures subsumed under, but remaining partially differentiated from, the overarching folk religion. As a result of folk religion's overarching position, it must ultimately foster an attitude of national self-transcendence. Warner's and Herberg's careful elaboration of an integrative and self-transcendent American folk religion, based on studies of symbolic behavior and surveys of American values, stimulated other sociologists to question whether folk religion was the only manifestation of American civil religion. Might American civil religion have an "elite" form as Greeley suggests? If American civil religion were to manifest the functions traditionally associated with religious systems, a prophetic
dimension could be expected. Perhaps the greatest contribu-
tion of the folk religion tradition in sociology was the
stimulus of further inquiry into the manifestations of Amer-
ican civil religion in American life.
CHAPTER V
THE TRANSCENDENT CIVIL RELIGION
OF ROBERT BELLAH

It is ironic that in the 1950s, a time of religious revival in the United States, historian Marty and sociologist Herberg found American civil religion manifest as a general, popular folk religion with little specific theological content. In the 1960s and early 1970s, popularly characterized as a nonreligious, "God Is Dead" era of American history, sociologists such as Robert Bellah and Andrew Greeley began to write of a transcendent, universal religion of the American nation. Transcendent universal religion of the nation is the second model of a civil religion reported by Richey and Jones (1974:15-16) in their review of the American civil religion literature. Within this model, American civil religion is portrayed as a set of divinely transcendent, normative ideals by which a society is defined, integrated, and ultimately judged. Transcendent universal religion differs from folk religion in two important respects. First, transcendent religion assumes a system of national ideals which exist as social facts apart from the extent of their acceptance by the American populace at any point in time. Folk religion, in contrast, takes the daily life behavior of the public as its major data source. Second, transcendent
religion is seen as fulfilling all the functions attributed
to traditional religious systems. The functions of folk re-
ligion are limited to only two of the traditional social
functions performed by religion: the creation and legitimate-
tion of cultural meaning and social integration. Memorial
Day rituals, for example, help legitimize the war experience
as an act of national purpose and rededicate the living to
the goals of the nation. These rituals are socially inte-
grating and identity reinforcing but are ultimately nation-
ally self-transcendent. Transcendent universal religion is
a civil religion capable of fulfilling the integrating and
legitimizing functions of folk religion, with the additional
function of divine prophetic guidance.

The Definition of American Civil Religion

In 1967, in an article entitled "Civil Religion in
America," Robert Bellah introduced the concept of transcenden-
t universal religion of the nation into the field of soci-
ological discourse. Bellah's model of American civil religion
flows from the Durkheimian assumption that moral facts, along
with social facts, are sui generis, and that social cohesion
rests upon common moral understandings rooted in religious
meaning structures (Bellah, 1975:ix). Bellah's model is
based also on Parsons's (1966:10-11) theory of a religiously-
based moral order, although Bellah does not necessary accept
all of Parsons's assumptions. Bellah asserts that American
civil religion exists as a social fact, subject to the same
type of inquiry as other religious systems. Bellah defines American civil religion as an institutionalized collection of sacred beliefs about the American nation, providing cohesion through national times of crisis (Bellah, 1974a:29). Civil religion is "that religious dimension found I think in the life of every people, through which it interprets its historical experience in the light of transcendent reality" (Bellah, 1975:3). The symbols of American civil religion and their institutionalization in American society may be observed through systematic examination of national documents. Specifically, Bellah examines the Declaration of Independence and the inaugural addresses of American presidents as indicators of the beliefs and values of American civil religion. Central to the American civil belief system in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a belief in the existence of God, in the American nation being subject to God's laws and in the divine guidance and protection of the nation (Bellah, 1974a:26-27). Common civil religious values were liberty, justice, charity, personal virtue, and individual freedom. America was often characterized by its early citizens as a new Israel, a wilderness which could be revealed as a paradise for God's chosen people (Bellah, 1975:x-xiii). According to Bellah (1975:153), these American beliefs, values, and symbols have a sacred dimension in that "they have revealed what reality is and how we should act in relation to it."

Although the symbols of American civil religion are
often rich in biblical imagery, they are clearly differentiated from the symbols of American denominational religion. Bellah (1974a:29) observes that from its inception American civil religion did not oppose and in fact shared much in common with Christianity; yet American civil religion "was neither sectarian nor in any specific sense Christian."
The differentiation of American civil religion from Christianity was not accomplished in order to placate members of minority religions. The differentiation occurred early in American history because national founders such as Franklin, Washington, and Jefferson determined that there should be a division of functions between American civil religion and Christianity.

Under the doctrine of religious liberty, an exceptionally wide sphere of personal piety and voluntary social action was left to the churches. But the churches were neither to control the state or be controlled by it. The national magistrate, whatever his private religious views, operates under the rubrics of the civil religion as long as he is in his official capacity . . ." (1974a: 29-30).

Bellah notes the official behavior of President John F. Kennedy as a modern illustration of the relationship between American civil religion and the American denominations. The Kennedy inaugural address of January 20, 1961, was filled with civil religious imagery but was void of any reference to denominational religion. Roman Catholic Kennedy reminded the nation that the rights of man were given by God, and that the achievement of national goals was dependent upon God's will, but refrained from mentioning Christ, Christian churches, or
Roman Catholicism (Bellah, 1974a:21-23). Bellah concludes that the separation of church and state in the United States has not prevented the political sphere from developing a religious dimension. It is this religious dimension of the polity as expressed through sacred beliefs, symbols, and rituals which Bellah distinguishes as the American civil religion (Bellah, 1974a:24).

The History of American Civil Religion

In The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial (1975), Bellah traces the symbolic history of American civil religion from seventeenth century Puritanism through the mid-1970s, stressing the unifying symbolism of the American "covenant" conceived of as existing between God and the citizens of the society. The covenant symbolism of American civil religion emerged initially in the parallel religious and political ideologies of the New England Calvinists. The Puritan religious dialectic of personal liberation through conversion, balanced by the moral obligation of covenant, is compared to the political process of revolution balanced by constitution (Bellah, 1975:32). Bellah stresses the close parallel between the religious and political dialectics of the Revolutionary period and believes their similarity represents more than mere formal analogy. Both religious conversion and political revolution are liberating processes whose potential for anarchy require counteraction through establishment and institutionalization. The American
The Functions of American Civil Religion

The concept of an American covenant is strongly suggestive of the unifying function of American civil religion. Bellah does not maintain that the potential for unity is always fulfilled. Instead, Bellah observes that the new American covenant was violated at once in the genocide of the American Indians and the institution of slavery. It required the revivalism of nineteenth-century evangelicalism and abolitionism, guided by the moral example of an Abraham Lincoln, to restore the covenant. Bellah views the twentieth century as a "new time of trial," as the American covenant is torn both internally and externally by two major sources of division: racial conflict and economic instability. Exploring the first source of division, Bellah finds that the civil
ideal of egalitarianism sometimes failed to unify an ethni-
cally plural society. From the genocide of the American
Indians, slavery, nativism, anti-Semitism, to twentieth-
century racism, the dominant majority of Americans could
sometimes see themselves as a "chosen people" engaged in a
"holy war" against a "sinful" minority group (Bellah, 1975:
101). As Cherry (1970:308) observes, in a culturally differ-
entiated society, the values of American civil religion can
become sub-differentiated to the point at which they foster
societal division rather than cohesion. Bellah (1975:106)
notes that, at certain periods of cultural change, a "trans-
valuation of roles" may be observed which "turns the despised
and oppressed into symbols of salvation and rebirth." The
1960s romanticization of the American Indian and the intense
public reaction in the 1970s to the slavery experience drama-
tized in Alex Haley's Roots serve as two recent examples of
the transvaluation of minority roles. It remains to be seen
whether such an altered image of the minority has a signifi-
cant impact on the integration of that minority.

Along with their inability to unite ethnic groups in an
egalitarian structure, the values of American civil religion
have failed to prevent structural cleavage in the economic
sphere. Bellah traces the origins of twentieth-century eco-
nomic strains to the early fusion of the Protestant Ethic
with the developing capitalist system. Puritan Cotton Mather
ceased serving as the archetypal American to be replaced by
the utilitarian Benjamin Franklin (Bellah, 1975:71). Bellah
believes that American capitalism was originally concordant with the civil religious ideal of individualism, but twentieth-century multinational corporations and interlocking directorates render that association obsolete today. As a result, "there is far more tension between basic American values and the capitalistic economic system than is usually assumed" (Bellah, 1975:116). Bellah argues that the Puritan view of work as a calling never sanctioned transforming work and the pursuit of wealth into ends-in-themselves. He believes that the American pursuit of material objects, fostered by advertising and central to the continuation of the existing economic system, clashes with the spiritual values stressed by the American national founders. The existence of large corporations does not embody individualism, the distribution of wealth does not exemplify egalitarianism, and freedom to choose a nonmaterialistic life-style does not really exist as an option available to the American masses. Bellah concludes that the external structure of American civil religion has been stretched to the breaking point by the economic development of the United States. A form of democratic socialism based on the idealistic principles of freedom and egalitarianism is recommended as an economic revival of the original ideals of the American covenant (Bellah, 1975:136-138).

The paradoxical potential of American civil religion for fostering both unity and division in society is symbolized by Bellah in the concept of the "broken covenant." The
image of a broken covenant is itself suggestive of a dialectic. When Bellah (1975:142) states that "today the American civil religion is an empty and broken shell," he does not mean that American civil religion has disappeared from American culture. Instead, the broken covenant signifies a society temporarily unable to be informed by its values and temporarily unable to institutionalize these values in a binding way.

Until we are all angels, external law and restraint are necessary for any kind of social existence. But in a republic an external covenant alone is never enough. It is the nature of a republic that its citizens must love it, not merely obey it. The external covenant must become an internal covenant and many times in our history that has happened. In a series of religious and ethical revivals, the external covenant has become filled with meaning and devotion. Even though that inner meaning and devotion has often been betrayed, genuine achievements have been left behind. It is better that slavery has been abolished. It is better that women have the vote. But the internal covenant can never be completely captured by institutions; its life is that of the spirit and it has its own rhythms (Bellah, 1975:142).

The dialectic of the broken covenant is also employed in Bellah's exploration of the transcendent and self-transcendent applications of American civil religion. Like historian Mead, Bellah has from the very beginning stressed the prophetic function of American civil religion. Bellah (1974b:225) believes that at the core of American civil religion is the belief that "the nation is not an ultimate end in itself but stands under transcendent judgement." American civil religion has value for American culture only to the extent that it recognizes an ultimate reality higher than the society itself. Bellah's model of a transcendent civil religion is
in marked contrast to the folk religionists' view of American civil religion as culturally reinforcing and socially integrating affirmation of the American way of life. Bellah (1976b:167) argues that

American civil religion has never been primarily an ideology intended to reinforce the authority of the state or cast a halo over institutions. The American civil religion has been quite explicitly oriented to a level of reality that transcends the state and institutions and relatively to which state and institutions are viewed as only conditionally legitimate.

Bellah contends that to conceive of American civil religion as folk religion is to see only public theology and not the genuine American civil religion. Transcendent American civil religion originated with the belief in a power higher than the citizen and the society, and that belief has been periodically renewed at significant moments in American history. For example, the tradition of morally-based civil disobedience, legitimized by Thoreau, found modern expression in the civil rights movement and the opposition to the Vietnamese war (Bellah, 1974a:40). Bellah is particularly interested in Abraham Lincoln as a civil religious prophet. Bellah cites Lincoln's opposition to the Spanish-American War (Bellah, 1974a:39) and Lincoln's 1857 speech attacking the Dred Scott decision of the United States Supreme Court (Bellah, 1976b:168) as examples of the institutionally critical potential of American civil religion.

Bellah is aware that the transcendent dimension of American civil religion is not always recognized by American society. At times the symbols of American civil religion are
used to support a pattern-maintaining public theology or are twisted into religious nationalism. Religious nationalism is the third model of American civil religion noted by Richey and Jones (1974:16). The direct opposite of transcendent American civil religion, religious nationalism represents a world view wherein the nation itself is personified and adored. Cherry distinguishes between religious nationalism and the transcendent universal religion of Bellah and Sidney Mead. "Religious nationalism implies a corporate attitude of unconditional reverence for the nation and for its intended goals." Transcendent civil religion, in comparison, "suggests a national attitude of reverence for a transcendent sovereign authority whose designs cannot be identified as one-to-one with the designs of the nation" (Cherry, 1971:17). There has been little systematic examination of religious nationalism as a specific model of American civil religion. Marty's (1974:152) analysis of priestly self-transcendent civil religion, embodied in the John Birch Society and some of Richard Nixon's speeches, indicates that religious nationalism may be one manifestation of American civil religion. Bellah is not unaware of the past and present effects of religious nationalism in the United States, such as imperialism, national isolationism, and racism. But Bellah treats these phenomena as examples of the broken covenant between the nation and its transcendent authority. Religious nationalism emerges when a society fails to remain informed by civil religion's prophetic message. Religious nationalism
is transcendent universal religion turned idolatrous. In Bellah's view, the transcendent and idolatrous applications of American civil religion are not separate forms of civil faith but good and evil sides of the same phenomenon. The variables which Bellah highlights as intervening in American society to foster the ideology of religious nationalism include the rise of science, the market economy, and industrial capitalism, which work together to facilitate self-transcendent interpretations of civil religion (Bellah, 1975:xiii).

Bellah's symbol of the broken covenant illustrates that an overarching, meaning-endowing, prophetic American civil religion can be forgotten by a society and its leaders, leaving a nation floundering in internal division, meaninglessness, and self-transcendence. Each of Bellah's major works on American civil religion has stressed the need for the renewal and reinstitutionalization of the original values of American civil religion. "Civil Religion in America" (1967) concludes with a prophetic call for the application of the underlying ethical principles of American civil religion to current national problems. In The Broken Covenant (1975:151), Bellah continues the prophetic warning: "We must reaffirm the outward or external covenant that includes the civil religion in its most classical form." Bellah looks to religious revival as the most promising vehicle for the renewal and reinstitutionalization of American civil religion. Bellah (1974b) postulates that American society may turn in the ideological direction of humanistic religious revolution
characterized by religious pluralism and heralded by some of the new religious movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Among the new religious organizations which are most likely to facilitate a renewal of American civil religion are millennial movements presenting ethical criticisms of modern American society and possessing democratic structures. The necessity for the latter attribute, a democratic structure, limits the field; for as Bellah (1975:160) observes, "the more egalitarian the group, the more ephemeral it is." Some of the most successful religious movements to emerge in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, such as The Unification Church of the Reverend Sun Myung Moon and the Children of God, are authoritarian in structure and unlikely to embody the traditional civil values of individualism and egalitarianism. Regardless of the source, Bellah believes that the religious renewal of the values of American civil religion is essential for the future of American society. Bellah's own belief in the potential of American civil religion to guide American society is not, however, sufficient to make him optimistic about American civil religion's restoration. Despite his own faith, Bellah (1974b:272) objectively concludes that "the crisis in the civil religion is deepening more rapidly than I had expected."
Bellah's Typology of American Civil Religion: General and Special Civil Religion

Bellah is able to discern numerous dimensions and manifestations of American civil religion. Bellah (1975:142) writes of American civil religion manifest as an internal covenant and as an external covenant. This distinction refers to the moral ideals of American civil religion as compared to their external institutionalization in society. Both manifestations are considered by Bellah to be social facts subject to sociological investigation. Bellah (1976a:167) also writes of the American civil religion as compared to public theology. Here Bellah compares the original transcendental ideals of American civil religion to their self-transcendental application by different groups at various times in history. In addition to these varying forms of American civil religion Bellah isolates two additional manifestations: general civil religion and special civil religion.

General civil religion, based on universal values, is the type of civil religion considered for many centuries to be a necessary prerequisite for political and social order. General civil religion provides the type of religious discipline necessary as the basis for the responsible, moral citizenship that leads to an integrated society. Bellah finds the idea of general civil religion evident in the writings of various American leaders.

Roger Williams, for example, for all his insistence on the separation of church and state, believed that such general religion was essential for what he called "government and order in families, towns, etc." . . . Elsewhere
Franklin emphasized the importance of general religion when he wrote, "If men are so wicked as we now see them with religion, what would they be without it?"--which in turn foreshadows Eisenhower's famous remark, "Our government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith--and I don't care what it is" (Bellah, 1976a:156).

Tocqueville's concept of republican religion is a comprehensive classical analysis of general civil religion. Republican religion is the moral law which affects political life through its influence on customs and daily life (Tocqueville, Vol. I, 1966:304). Through republican religion's generalized synthesis of democratic values and belief in a supreme being, a foundation of good citizenship and social cohesion is built.

In the United States a special form of civil religion developed which is congruent with, but partially differentiated from, the general values of the culture. In the case of the United States, special civil religion came to be based particularly upon the specific democratic values derived from the Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary tradition (Bellah, 1976a:156). Special civil religion is American civil religion as it has been documented by Bellah's systematic examination of national documents. For example, the general belief in democratic values exemplifies general civil religion, while the derivation of these beliefs from the American Constitution illustrates special civil religion. Special civil religion is also evidenced in the belief in America as a "new Israel" (Bellah, 1976b:167). Bellah (1976a:156) notes the partial overlapping of general
and special civil religion in American society, and observes that most religious groups in the United States have been able to affirm aspects of both general and special civil religion. Figure 2 illustrates the central attributes of general and special civil religion, presented here as varying along the Parsonian continuum of value generalization, which Parsons (1966:23) classifies as a process of modernization. Bellah's typology of general and special civil religion is more descriptive than predictive. Bellah suggests that forms of civil religion may vary in generality, ranging from the universal general civil religion to the particular special civil religion, but fails to specify the conditions under which special civil religion develops as a religious form which is partially differentiated from general civil religion. Bellah's typology of civil religion remains a categorical tool most useful for describing different levels of value generalization observable in civil religious symbol systems.

Conclusion

Bellah is the first to develop a sociological model of a transcendent American civil religion. According to John F. Wilson (1974:127-129), Bellah's model specifically refers to several distinct dimensions and functions of American civil religion neglected by previous models. According to Wilson, the most central dimension of Bellah's model is ideological. The ideological dimension of American civil religion is that
### VALUE GENERALIZATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universalism</th>
<th>Particularism</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>I. General Civil Religion</strong></td>
<td><strong>II. Special Civil Religion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides general moral basis for citizenship</td>
<td>Provides specific national symbols of divine transcendence</td>
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**Fig. 2. Generality of Civil Religious Values** (Bellah, 1976a)
of a nation living out God's will on earth. Through use of the motif of a new Israel Americans are able to locate their role in history and legitimize national actions as God's will. The ideological dimension of American civil religion points to its prophetic function, as God is seen as the higher authority governing and judging the society. A second dimension of Bellah's model refers to the civil religious figures who have been major prophets or priests of American civil religion. George Washington and Abraham Lincoln are obvious leaders, and modern prophets such as John Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. are also important. Even self-transcendent figures such as Richard Nixon have made contributions to the history of American civil religion. A third dimension of Bellah's model is the specific historical events and the places associated with them which have become sacred to the American people. Gettysburg, Washington, D.C., and the Alamo are sacred places representing sacred history to many Americans. The recollection of these historical events functions both to define the society's role in history and to unify its citizens. A final dimension in Bellah's model of American civil religion is the ceremonial dimension. Bellah, like Warner and Cherry, focuses upon the ritual expression of civil religion as indicators of its ideology. The ceremonies of a presidential inaugural, Memorial Day, or the Fourth of July provide opportunities to observe ceremonial civil religious behavior.

Wilson (1974:129) concludes that Bellah's model of
American civil religion is superior to Warner's folk religion model, although both include some of the same dimensions and sources of data. Bellah's model succeeds where Warner's fails in pointing out specific types of symbolic behavior and belief which refer to the religious dimension of the American polity. Unlike Warner and Herberg, who tend to view all cultural symbolism as civil religious, Bellah differentiates civil religious from other types of cultural symbolism. Wilson observes that Bellah's differentiation of civil religious phenomena makes his model more productive than Warner's for generating empirical research. Bellah's model of American civil religion also contains an additional element missing from the folk religion model: theology. The central, theological dimension of Bellah's American civil religion refers to a transcendent God. In contrast to the theologically contentless folk religion of Marty, Warner, and Herberg, Bellah stresses the transcendent and universal features of American civil religion which could make it, in Bellah's words, "simply one part of a new civil religion of the world" (quoted in Richey and Jones, 1974:16). Of all of the elements of Bellah's model of American civil religion, it is its theological dimension which has generated the greatest amount of subsequent controversy.
CHAPTER VI

THE RESPONSE TO BELLAH

The reaction to Bellah's sociological model of a transcendent universal American civil religion was considerable. Several books (e.g., Cherry, 1971; Novak, 1974; Richey and Jones, 1974) and numerous articles (e.g., Cherry, 1970; Coleman, 1970; Fenn, 1972, 1974, 1976; Greeley, 1972: Chap. 7; Jolicoeur and Knowles, 1978; Neuhaus, 1970; Stauffer, 1973; Thomas and Flippen, 1972; Wimberly, 1976) appeared in direct response to Bellah's model. Contemporary social scientists were not responding simply to the concept of American civil religion. Historical models (e.g., Tocqueville, Hudson, Marty, and Mead) have been well-known but have stimulated little sociological attention. The folk religion models of Warner and Herberg have become sociological classics but generated only sporadic sociological inquiry in the 1970s (e.g., Cherry, 1970; Greeley, 1972). Bellah renewed intellectual inquiry into American civil religion by seriously postulating the existence of a transcendent universal American civil religion which, in its impact on American culture, went far beyond ceremonial occasions. Bellah also suggested a systematic method for the study of American civil religion through the examination of national documents. Bellah's model and his methods stimulated two types of

Theoretical Response

Richard Fenn

Bellah's most outspoken critic has been Richard Fenn (1972; 1974; 1976). Fenn is skeptical of Bellah's entire American civil religion model, but the heart of Fenn's critique is based on his disagreement with Bellah's basic assumptions concerning the function of religion in contemporary American society. At the center of the controversy between Bellah and Fenn are questions concerning the existence of the United States as a society and the ability of religion to provide a basis for social integration. Both Bellah and Fenn ask the following questions, but arrive at different conclusions: (1) Does American society exist as an ideological whole? (2) Can religion provide moral integration for modern society? (3) Does American civil religion exist as a social fact of contemporary life? (4) Can civil religion provide a basis for twentieth-century ideological renewal? and (5) Is it a proper role for the scientific observer to call
for a reaffirmation of civil faith in a morally torn society? Bellah's model is based on an affirmative response to all five questions, while Fenn's critique is based on a negative response.

Fenn doubts Bellah's basic premise that American civil religion exists as a social fact institutionalized in the American social structure. Fenn's doubts about the institutionalization of American civil religion are based on his general analysis of American society. A summary of Fenn's (1970) critical response to Parsons's (1966:10-11) model of a religiously based moral order can be seen as a preview of Fenn's subsequent position on the inviability of contemporary American civil religion. Fenn assumes that modern American society is involved in the process of secularization, characterized by differentiation within cultural and social systems as well as between these system levels. Religious pluralism is one by-product of this differentiation. To the extent that plural systems are internalized by personality systems, they become bases for different religious affiliations and thus sources of ideological conflict rather than sources of cohesion. For example, the differentiation of the social from the personality system leads to a situation in which the individual's choice of ultimate meaning systems is not tied to his social role performances. An American could succeed or fail in his economic role regardless of his choice to be Presbyterian or agnostic. Under a system of structural pluralism, it is left up to the individual to
attempt to integrate private religious choices with the normative system of society (Fenn, 1970:133-135). Fenn (1970:118) observes that "secularization implies the increasing autonomy of both personality systems and role patterns from the prescriptions of the normative order," with the result that the normative order must fail to persist. Fenn asserts that the only remaining functions of religion in modern society are (1) providing expressive functions for groups and individuals, (2) defining ethnic or traditional boundaries between groups, and (3) legitimating demands of local groups for control over institutions such as education. Religion continues to provide integration only for societies which have difficulty training and motivating a labor force (Fenn, 1972:17). Fenn believes that the sources for the new, non-religious legitimacy in advanced societies are legal, political, and economic, based on the society's capacities to meet popular demands for political participation and a high consumption level (Fenn, 1972:17).

Fenn sees no overarching religious tradition in the United States capable of binding moral force. Fenn's position on the deterioration of the religious basis of the normative order has direct implications for the study of American civil religion. Fenn (1976:165) acquiesces to the possibility that American civil religion could have provided an overarching value system in the nineteenth century but argues that American civil religious symbolism fails to bind cultural, societal, and personal spheres of action in contemporary
America. Fenn does not deny that American civil religion once developed. He suggests instead that American civil religion developed early in the nation's history (under conditions which he does not specify) and then failed to persist under the contemporary conditions of differentiation at all system levels.

Fenn (1976) has developed a typology of American civil religion in response to Bellah's typology (see part II, chapter 2:57-59) which illustrates his differentiation thesis. Fenn's two categories of American civil religion are produced by differentiation within religious culture. Fenn (1976:162) proposes that structural differentiation within modern society will increase the degree of separation between forms of religious culture. This phenomenon is illustrated by the emergence of two types of American civil religion, societal and personal civil religion. Societal civil religion combines national and biblical symbols and provides the motivational base of corporate actors within the social system. Personal civil religion expresses ethical piety and assists the identity development of individual persons (Fenn, 1976:162). Figure 3 summarizes Fenn's typology. Fenn (1976:162) sees societal civil religion as comparable to Bellah's special civil religion, while personal civil religion is analogous to Bellah's general civil religion. (See figure 2, chapter 5.) Fenn argues that the differentiation of forms of American civil religion at the societal and individual levels is evidence that there is no overarching form of American
DIFFERENTIATION WITHIN RELIGIOUS CULTURE

Personality ___________________________ Social System

I. Personal Civil Religion
   A. Provides for time-less identity
   B. Motivates individual identity development

II. Societal Civil Religion
   A. Provides socio-historical identity
   B. Motivates corporate actors

Fig. 3. Personal and Societal Civil Religion (Fenn, 1976)
civil religion which can bind the individual to society. In Fenn's view, American religious culture currently possesses no macro-level function, although values are manifestly important to the individual personality. "The relevance of personal identity or ultimate ends to any complex, large scale organization is extremely tenuous" (Fenn, 1976:165). Applying this analysis to the religious dimension of the polity, Fenn concludes that societal civil religion (Bellah's special civil religion) has lost its function for contemporary society.

An evaluation of Fenn's versus Bellah's typology is made difficult by the fact that Fenn's categories of societal and personal civil religion are based on structural differentiation, while Bellah's types of special and general civil religion vary along a continuum of value generalization. Value generalization and structural differentiation are complementary, but not identical, processes, (Parsons, 1971:26-27). Fenn's conclusion that societal civil religion is exactly what Bellah means by special civil religion is open to question. Figure 4 presents the two typologies as if they were structurally parallel, as Fenn concludes. According to figure 4, Bellah's special civil religion becomes progressively weakened in its ability to unite citizens with differing personal value systems. However, it is possible to agree with Fenn's differentiation thesis without accepting the assumption that special civil religion has lost its unifying potential. Figure 5 accounts for the possibility that
DIFFERENTIATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality System</th>
<th>Social System</th>
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<tr>
<td>I. General Civil Religion (Bellah)</td>
<td>II. Special Civil Religion (Bellah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Personal Civil Religion (Fenn)</td>
<td>II. Societal Civil Religion (Fenn)</td>
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</tbody>
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Fig. 4. Bellah's versus Fenn's Typology of Civil Religion: Parallel Perspective (Fenn, 1976)
Fig. 5. Bellah's versus Fenn's Typology of Civil Religion: Synthetic Perspective
elements of both general and special civil religion could be present at the societal level. Although societal and personal types of civil religion may be differentiated, as Fenn observes, both types may be subsumed under Bellah's category of special civil religion. Neither Bellah nor Fenn currently takes the synthetic perspective suggested by figure 5, although this perspective is as logically possible as either of the independent typologies. Until there is further systematic development of both typologies and further specification of the factors assumed to produce typological variation, neither Bellah's nor Fenn's typology of American civil religion is likely to generate productive empirical research.

Fenn and Bellah differ on more than their models of American civil religion or on their general theories of religion. Moral cleavage accompanies their intellectual debate. Fenn operates within the traditional, scientific role of ethical neutrality by dispassionately observing the increasing irrelevance of societal values to individual purpose. If there is a contemporary crisis of faith and morality, Fenn serves as its detailed observer and analyst. Fenn's philosophical stance concerning American civil religion is expressed at the conclusion of a recent clarification of his theory.

If the separation of the symbols and institutions relevant to national authority from those relevant to the individual's search for identity which will survive the threat of death has antinomian implications, it will not be for the first time in Western religious history (Fenn, 1976:166).
Fenn views Bellah as a sociologist stepping unwarrantedly into a prophetic role. Bellah's own commitment to the values of American civil religion makes the validity of his scientific view problematic for Fenn. In Fenn's (1976:160) evaluation, Bellah's model of American civil religion represents "the new orthodoxy." Bellah (1976a:157), in turn, affirms his ethical neutrality by arguing that if the particular values of American civil religion can be historically and socially documented, their weakening may also be observed. A prophetic call for the renewal of American civil religion is therefore justified for the preservation of a society's identity. The moral cleavage between Bellah and Fenn is most deeply expressed in Bellah's rebuke of the scientist who would examine a disease but avoid exploring its cure. The philosophical distance between Bellah and Fenn is so great that recent theoretical exchange between the two sociologists (Bellah, 1976a, 1967b; Fenn, 1976) has been tainted by personal bitterness that impedes productive discourse.

Andrew Greeley

Greeley devotes a chapter of The Denominational Society (1972:156-174) to "The Civil Religion." Unlike Fenn, Greeley has no problem conceiving of an overarching normative order in American society. "The sociologist, accustomed as he is from reading Durkheim and Weber to expect religion in society, is not terribly surprised by these sacral underpinnings of the American consensus" (Greeley, 1972:157). After
reviewing the folk religion models of Eckhardt (1958), Herberg (1960), and Marty (1959), Greeley concludes that there is more to the American normative consensus than a watered-down system of religion in general. Folk religion is only one observable manifestation of American civil religion. The other manifestation is the noble, prophetic elite form of American civil religion. Greeley's concept of elite civil religion corresponds to Bellah's model of transcendent, universal American civil religion (Greeley, 1972:167-173). Greeley agrees with Bellah's location of the symbols of American civil religion in national documents and civic celebrations. Greeley also agrees that the symbols of American civil religion reveal that the American nation has a religious dimension represented, in part, by the celebration of sacred places and sacred days. Like Bellah, Greeley finds no contradiction in the possibility that folk and elite forms of American civil religion could exist alongside of one another in the same society.

It is easy to be cynical about America's civil religion, as we have noted before, but then it is easy to be cynical about the principles of any religion because the most noble of religious ideals are anything but universally honored in practice, no matter what the religion be or what the society in which the religion operates. Folk religion, the religion of comfort and reassurance, the religion of self-righteousness, are not new in the world. Neither is turning religion into a justification for pursuing the selfish goals of the community, but the difference between the theory and the practice should not cause the observer to lose his respect for the theory and for its power to be a norm against which the failures can be evaluated (Greeley, 1972:173).
Greeley's response to Bellah is an affirmation of the transcendent, universal model of American civil religion. Both Bellah and Greeley agree that the consensual basis of American society has a sacred dimension. Both recognize the legitimating, integrating, and prophetic potential of American civil religion in its elite form, but recognize also that the values of American civil religion can be practiced in self-legitimating and self-worshiping forms.

Conrad Cherry

Cherry (1970; 1971) has been inspired by Warner's method of symbolic analysis of American sacred ceremonies to accumulate data supportive of Bellah's model of transcendent universal American civil religion. Through his analysis of American cults of the dead such as the funeral ceremonies of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Robert Kennedy, Cherry concludes that American civil religion performs legitimating and integrating functions for American society. Cherry, like Bellah, finds that the American covenant is sometimes broken, or weakened, in its integrative ability in modern society. Early in the nation's history, the funeral services of Jefferson and Adams were able to overarch national divisions to unify a young nation. By 1968, American society was sufficiently differentiated that Robert Kennedy's funeral failed to bind certain groups who saw Kennedy's death as evidence of the failure of national values. According to Cherry, the divisive potential of American civil religion is not new in
American history. Cherry (1970:309) finds that Confederate war propaganda used during the Civil War "relied heavily on the time-tested motifs of the national faith" and is a clear example of the "capacity of the same theme both to unify and divide the nation." Despite his observation of the sometimes divisive effects of American civil religion, Cherry would not agree with Fenn that American civil religion entirely lacks integrative potential. Although modern American civil religion is differentiated along regional, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines, it is a discernible "national religious point of view." Cherry concludes that "the myths, symbols, and sources of revelation of civil religion are sufficiently continuous and uniform to constitute an isolable religion that has operated vigorously in the American public sphere" (Cherry, 1970:310). American civil religion need not be a monolithic entity to remain more integrative than divisive for the majority of citizens.

Another aspect of American civil religion observed by Cherry is its dual relationship to American values and goals. American civil religion has "offered both uncritical religious sanction and prophetic criticism of the culture" (Cherry, 1970:313). American sacred ceremonies, such as Memorial Day rituals, are often culturally reinforcing rites of folk religion. But Cherry believes that the observers of American civil religion have been too ready to identify this religion with the banal celebration of the American way of life. "If the national faith has issued in 'cookie prayers' in the
public schools, it has also been expressed in solemn occasions when American citizens dedicate themselves to high human ideals" (Cherry, 1970:304). Some American sacred ceremonies are notable for their prophetic messages. For example, Lincoln's second inaugural address attributed the Civil War to the wrath of God descending on the American people. Archbishop Cooke's eulogy for Robert Kennedy noted the discrepancy between the American civil value of freedom and its unequal distribution in American life. These and other American ceremonies serve as indicators "that the civil religion need not be insensitive to the limitations and shortcomings of the nation, that religious expressions of national ideals need not be uncritical ones" (Cherry, 1970:314).

Cherry, like Bellah and Greeley, has no difficulty conceiving of an American civil religion which is both integrative and divisive, legitimating, and prophetic. Cherry (1970:314) points out that this dual relation of American civil religion to American culture is typical of most forms of religion. As Peter Berger (1967:97-100) observes, religion in Western history has been both a "world-maintaining" and "world-shaking" force. It would be reasonable to assume that American civil religion would also perform both functions. The folk religion model, which focuses only upon world maintenance, is limited in its perspective. Bellah's model provides for both world-maintaining and world-shaking manifestations of American civil religion, and is therefore
more congruent with the observed relation of religious forms to their cultural contexts.

**Empirical Response**

Thomas and Flippen

Only a few empirical studies have specifically investigated transcendent civil religion in America. Thomas and Flippen's (1972) content analysis of the editorials of a national sample of newspapers published during the "Honor America" weekend, July 4, 1970, is one of the earliest empirical responses to Bellah's model of transcendent universal American civil religion. Thomas and Flippen attempted to determine the existence of an independent American civil religion which could "provide a transcendent goal and meaning system for the political process, and to motivate the achievement of national, political goals" (Thomas and Flippen, 1972:219).

The purpose of the study was a specific test of Bellah's thesis of a universal transcendent civil religion in American society. The coding instrument, intended to distinguish between civil religion items and their secular equivalents, relied on the mention of God as the main criterion of civil religiosity. For example, "God has blessed America" would be coded as a civil religion item; "America has been blessed," as a secular item (Thomas and Flippen, 1972:221). Analysis of data indicated that a fairly large number of secular civil themes were found in the Honor America editorials, but few of the themes specifically referred to a deity. Thomas and
Flippen conclude that, although many of the values Bellah attributes to American civil religion are significant values of American culture, these values are not commonly attributed to divine origin. Therefore, "a well-defined thesis of civil religion may be more the creation (and fantasy) of the liberal political intellectual elite than active faith among the masses" (Thomas and Flippen, 1972:224).

An alternative interpretation of Thomas and Flippen's findings is suggested by an evaluation of their measurement instrument. Many sociologists of religion would not agree that the defining criterion of religiosity is a belief in a supreme being. Presence or absence of a "sense" of ultimate meaning is a more commonly accepted contemporary criterion of religiosity (e.g., Bellah, 1964; Yinger, 1963; Stauffer, 1973), although this criterion is difficult to operationalize. Thomas and Flippen's reliance on the mention of God to separate civil religion items from secular items may have unfairly limited the number of items that could be considered religious. Even if it were agreed that a test of Bellah's particular model of transcendent universal American civil religion would require some notion of a transcendent being, it is not evident that the reference to God must be explicit. It is not clear that the editorialist who wrote "America has been blessed" did not assume or wish to imply that it was God who did the blessing. Unfortunately, there is no way to measure items which reflect cultural values which may be so generally associated with supernatural origins that the need
to state the origins explicitly may be considered unnecessary. Despite the difficulties in developing an accurate measurement of civil religious symbols, Thomas and Flippen's data actually show that secular civil themes were commonly expressed, but the transcendent nature of these themes could not be demonstrated.

Jolicoeur and Knowles

Another content analysis, conducted by Jolicoeur and Knowles (1978), found evidence of a civil religion of transcendent values among Masonic fraternal orders. Data were collected from issues of The New Age, a national Masonic journal, from 1964 to 1974. Jolicoeur and Knowles used a coding guide for civil religion items which was more general than that used by Thomas and Flippen (1972) and which included fewer items. One item, the mention of "founding fathers," is coded as a civil religion item by Jolicoeur and Knowles (1978:11) although Thomas and Flippen (1972:221) coded the same item as secular. This lack of agreement between the coding forms used in the two studies hinders the accumulation of a body of comparative data concerning American civil religion. Based on their own coding scheme, Jolicoeur and Knowles found support for Bellah's model of transcendent American civil religion in The New Age. Unlike the editorials reviewed by Thomas and Flippen, nearly half (46.5 percent) of The New Age issues mentioned "God." Belief in God was frequently cited in the context of references to the
United States, United States history, and national goals. In the Masonic journal, "belief in God is also viewed as the foundation of American success and strength" (Jolicoeur and Knowles, 1978:12). It is interesting that Jolicoeur and Knowles discovered symbols of a transcendent American civil religion, not among the "liberal intellectual elite" expected by Thomas and Flippen, but among a traditional conservative segment of the American public, Masonic lodge members. Unfortunately, due to the differences between the measurement instruments used by Jolicoeur and Knowles and by Thomas and Flippen, it is not possible to compare the conclusions of the two content analyses in a meaningful way.

Ronald C. Wimberly

Two studies conducted by Ronald C. Wimberly (Wimberly et al., 1976; Wimberly, 1976) were designed to provide an empirical test of Bellah's model of transcendent universal American civil religion. Both studies were surveys of individual belief systems. Civil religious belief measurement items were designed to measure the transcendent aspects of American civil religion cited in Bellah's (1967) work (see Appendix). The majority of civil religion items mentioned a transcendent God, as in the item "We should respect the president's authority since his authority is from God." The few items which did not mention a supreme being linked Christianity to the political system, as in "Good Christians aren't necessarily good patriots" (Wimberly et al., 1976:893). The
civil religion measurement items, combined with items measuring denominational religious belief, were administered first to a small sample (115) of orthodox Protestants. Factor analysis of the survey data revealed the presence of a separate civil religious dimension which was clearly differentiated from indicators of denominational religion. In the first order factoring, civil religion items clustered together more distinctly than the denominational religion items. Second-ordering factoring confirmed that, although the civil religious dimension was positively related to aspects of denominational belief and behavior, civil religion remained a distinct dimension clearly separable from denominational religion. A second survey (Wimberly, 1976) used measurement items drawn predominantly from the earlier study, supplemented with additional items measuring degrees of political commitment. Data were gathered from a heterogeneous sample of 574 persons which included subsamples of church attenders and persons with political interests. Factor and cluster analysis of the data indicated that first order factorings and clusterings showed a discrimination between civil religion indicators and indicators of both denominational religion and political dimensions. Higher order analyses found the civil religion dimension loading near two of the denominational religion indicators (belief and behavior) and close to one political commitment indicator (belief). Wimberly interprets these findings as a confirmation of a distinct
civil religious belief system which may prove to be an "inter­
tervening link" between denominational belief and political
commitment (Wimberly, 1976:350). Due to the transcendent
content of the civil religion indicators, Wimberly is con­
vinced that he has made a valid measurement of the transcendent
civil religion of Bellah's model, and not of public the­
ology. The fact that Wimberly's civil religion items
factored together, clustered tightly, and had fairly high
communalities indicates reliability of the instrument as a
whole. Wimberly (1976:349-350) concludes that his research
"extends support for the civil religion hypothesis" of
Bellah and advances civil religion to "the status of a
social scientific concept." The remaining empirical task is
the determination of the function of American civil religion
in American society.

Conclusion

The response to Bellah has been immediate and mixed.
On the theoretical front Richard Fenn emerges as Bellah's
most adamant and sophisticated antagonist. Fenn doubts the
very existence of American civil religion and is particularly
skeptical of Bellah's transcendent model of American civil
religion. In contrast, both Greeley and Cherry are comfort­
able with the idea of an overarching belief system for soci­
ety and find Bellah's model of transcendent universal civil
religion to be a productive analysis of civil religion in
its elite form. The theoretical state of American civil
religion within contemporary sociology has become a pro-
Bellah versus anti-Bellah debate which is far from being
over. Other voices in the next round of the debate will be
heard in the following chapter as the issue of theoretical
clarification of American civil religion is addressed more
specifically.

The empirical response to Bellah's model is still in
its infancy. Studies which attempt to determine if American
civil religion exists are hampered by the absence of a clear
definition of American civil religion which is universally
accepted in the social sciences. It has been particularly
difficult to develop a criterion for the measurement of the
transcendent aspect of American civil religion. It remains
unclear whether including mention of God in an item is suffi-
cient to insure indication of transcendent belief, or omission of God proves secularity. Each of the studies reviewed
relied on a different civil religion measurement instrument,
making comparison of results extremely difficult. Wimberly's
instrument was subject to the most sophisticated examination
and appears to be the most promising instrument for future
individual belief research on American civil religion.

Wimberly's research, which directly challenges Penn's assump-
tion that a civil religious dimension does not exist, could
become the foundation upon which an adequate body of empiri-
cal data could begin to be built. But it is evident that
some of the methodological problems of American civil reli-
gion measurement are embedded in the current chaos of
American civil religion theory. Until a logical, coherent model of American civil religion can be systematized in the form of testable propositions, American civil religion is likely to remain elusive to empirical investigators.
CHAPTER VII

THE NEED FOR CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The analysis of differing traditions of American civil religion research and differing theoretical models of American civil religion illustrates the contemporary need for conceptual clarification. There are gaps in the body of knowledge concerning American civil religion, varying definitions of American civil religion leading to conceptual debate among major theorists, and difficulties generating precise measurement instruments. Much of the confusion can be traced to the coexistence of the five models of American civil religion: folk religion, democratic faith, religious nationalism, Protestant civic piety, and transcendent universal religion of the nation (Richey and Jones, 1974). The five models have different emphases, but are also interconnected at various points. As Richey and Jones (1974:18) observe, "the very diversity of conceptualization represented in this fivefold typology illustrates both the complexity of the issue and the pioneer character of the study and debate."

In order to simplify the complexity and move American civil religion research out of its pioneering stage, selection of the most productive model or synthesis of models is in order. Because the transcendent universal model of Robert Bellah is the most comprehensive and has been the most empirically
productive of the five models, it will serve as the basic model from which definitions and assumptions concerning American civil religion will be derived.

The transcendent universal American civil religion of Bellah (1967; 1975) is the most comprehensive of the five models, due to the fact that it includes the other four models as possible manifestations of the basic model or as departures from it. Bellah (1975), who placed the origins of American civil religion within the American Puritan tradition, includes the Protestant civic piety model as typical of early American civil religion. Bellah would argue, however, that Protestant values have to be universalized and generalized to integrate diverse groups into the American tradition. The 1961 inaugural speech of Catholic President John F. Kennedy illustrates the success of this generalization of values (Bellah, 1974a:21-23). The transcendent universal model also contains the options for the expression of folk religion and religious nationalism. Through the image of the "broken covenant," Bellah (1975) symbolizes the idolatrous application of American civil values to public theology and national self-worship. Bellah does not directly address the democratic faith model of personal value construction, but Bellah himself exemplifies individual adherence to a humanistic (and in Bellah's case, theological) belief system shaped by the values of American civil religion. The transcendent universal model of American civil religion advanced by Bellah is the most inclusive of the five models because, by describing American
civil religion in its ideal, normative form, all civil religious behavior directed toward or away from the ideal can be measured and included for analysis.

Examination of various models of American civil religion presented in the literature led John F. Wilson (1974) to evaluate the utility of each model for furthering research. Wilson concluded that the model of American civil religion developed by Bellah (1967) is the most productive, making "visible, and even intelligible, ranges of phenomena in American history . . ." (Wilson, 1974:130). The productivity of the model is based on its specificity in distinguishing the religious aspects of American symbolism and its inclusion of empirically productive sources of data such as the pronouncements of civil religious figures like Lincoln, religious events endowing symbolic meaning to civil faith, places associated with civil religious events, and ceremonial rituals. Although Wilson's own use of these data sources failed to find sufficient evidence to support Bellah's transcendent hypothesis, Wilson believes that the negative findings in no way negate the testability of the model. As has been previously noted, the transcendent universal model of American civil religion has stimulated more recent sociological empirical studies (e.g., Jolicoeur and Knowles, 1978; Thomas and Flippen, 1972; Wimberly et al., 1976; Wimberly, 1976) than have alternative models.

One of the limitations of Bellah's transcendent universal model of American civil religion has been the absence of
a precise definition of American civil religion which distinguishes American civil religion from other religious forms and from civil society. Bellah originally defines American civil religion as an "institutionalized collection of sacred beliefs providing cohesion through national times of trial." The sacred beliefs of American civil religion are to be found and delineated through examination of national documents (Bellah, 1974a). John A. Coleman (1970), working with the transcendent universal model, has derived a more specific definition of American civil religion. Coleman suggests that a definition of civil religion should be a logical outgrowth of a definition of religion. Since there is almost as little sociological consensus concerning the definition of religion as the definition of civil religion, Coleman follows Bellah's (1965:171) definition of religion as "a set of symbolic acts which relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence" (Coleman, 1970:68). Religion is further defined as providing sources of social and personal identity by assisting individuals in dealing with questions of ultimate meaning and by suggesting a value system to guide self-concept formation and role performance. Coleman observes that it is not necessary for religion explicitly to relate the individual to his nation or citizen role. Universalistic religions, for example, attempt to transcend the limitations of national identification. However, there are often pressures, both from religious systems and political systems, to extend religious symbolism to the citizen role.
Religious organizations may require social support for their continuance. Political systems may need religious legitimacy for the support of national values and social control mechanisms. Thus, a need for a civil religious system which relates the citizen's role and the society to issues of ultimate concern may develop. Bellah (1967:173) suggested that the need for a civil religious symbol system was most likely to be demonstrated "at a moment of great social crisis ... or at a time of momentous political transition." This role of civil religion would be analogous to the traditional role of religion in providing symbols of identity and ultimate meaning at critical moments of the individual life cycle, such as birth and death.

Using Bellah's general definition of religion and its functions, and applying these to cases in which religious symbols are extended to the society and the citizen's role, Coleman develops the most precise definition of civil religion to emerge from the literature.

Civil religion is a special case of the religious symbol system, designed to perform a differentiated function which is the unique province of neither church nor state. It is a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man as citizen and his society in world history to the ultimate conditions of his existence. Civil religion, however, is not always or usually clearly differentiated from the church or the state (Coleman, 1970:69).

Coleman's definition of civil religion has been condensed and slightly reworded to form a basic definition of American civil religion, stated in the form of the following sociological proposition:
Proposition I:

American civil religion is the religious symbol system which relates the citizen's role and American society's place in space, time, and history to the conditions of ultimate existence and meaning.

Coleman's definition, stated in Proposition I, is a logical outgrowth of Bellah's sociology of religion and Bellah's transcendent universal model of American civil religion. In his 1975 work, Bellah offers a similar definition, calling civil religion "that religious dimension, found . . . in the life of every people, through which it interprets its historical experience in the light of transcendent reality" (Bellah, 1975:3). Coleman's definition has the advantage of including reference to both the individual and societal levels of civil religion, and has the potential to guide contemporary sociological research into American civil religion more specifically than have previous definitions.
PART III

AMERICAN CIVIL RELIGION AND

AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS
CHAPTER VIII

THE DIFFERENTIATION OF AMERICAN CIVIL RELIGION FROM AMERICAN DENOMINATIONS AND AMERICAN POLITICS

Coleman (1970:69) has defined civil religion as a "special case of the religious symbol system, designed to perform a differentiated function which is the unique province of neither church nor state." But civil religion as it has been observed throughout history "is not always or usually clearly differentiated from the church or state." Coleman (1970:74) proposes, however, that "in America we find almost a unique case of civil religion differentiated from both church and state." Coleman expects American civil religion to be differentiated from political and religious communities as a consequence of the general degree of differentiation in advanced societies. Only in a society such as the United States, where religious and political institutions are differentiated, would a further differentiation of an institutionalized set of civil beliefs be expected. Coleman's assumption is summarized in the form of the second major proposition concerning the history and development of American civil religion:

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proposition II:
American civil religion is structurally differentiated from both the political community and the religious community.

Theoretical Studies
Talcott Parsons

Determination of the level of differentiation of American civil religion from other social institutions is partially dependent upon the criterion of differentiation. Parsons (1971:26) defines differentiation as "the division of a unit or structure in a social system into two or more units of structures that differ in their characteristics and functional significance for the system." In the general action system, differentiation may occur within systems or between major system levels. Types of differentiation relevant to the discussion of religious symbol systems include differentiation within the cultural system, within the social structure, between social and cultural systems, and between social and personality systems. Differentiation within the cultural system can take place, for example, along the line of generality of religious values. Particularistic values, such as religious fundamentalism, may arise to counteract the differentiation of more universal value systems. Differentiation within the cultural system may account for the differentiation of particularistic American public theology from the more transcendent universal values of Bellah's
model of American civil religion. The separation of religious and political institutions in historic times serves as an example of differentiation within the social structure. The further differentiation of a civil religious structure, not dependent on political or religious communities, would be an extension of this type of differentiation. Differentiation between system levels occurs because the two systems do not exactly overlap. The development of denominational pluralism in the United States is an example of congruent differentiation from the cultural system of Judeo-Christian values. Differentiation between social and personality systems would be evidenced when religious communities are challenged by individual autonomy. Richard Fenn (1970:133-135) has observed that the differentiation of the social from the personality system leads to a situation in which the individual's choice of ultimate meaning systems does not affect his social role performances. Fenn (1976:165) concludes that due to the differentiation between system levels, no religious symbol system, including American civil religion, is capable of binding cultural, social, and personal spheres of action.

In the Parsonian model, three other processes of structural change accompany differentiation: adaptive upgrading, inclusion, and value generalization. Parsons (1971:26) specifies that differentiation at any level results in higher evolution if and only if each new unit has greater adaptive capacity than the old, previously undifferentiated unit.
parsons calls this process adaptive upgrading. With adaptive upgrading a wider range of resources becomes available to differentiating units than had been available to their predecessors. Both the processes of differentiation and adaptive upgrading pose problems for the integration of new units. The problems can be solved by the inclusion of the newly differentiated units within the normative structure of the society. Ultimately, the processes of differentiation, adaptive upgrading and inclusion are completed by value generalization. If newly differentiated units are to gain legitimation in the increasingly complex social structure "the value pattern itself must be couched at a higher level of generality in order to insure social stability" (Parsons, 1971:27). The relationship between differentiation, adaptive upgrading, inclusion, and value generalization as outlined by Parsons is important for tracing the development of American civil religion. The transcendent universal model portrays an American civil religion which is differentiated from other social institutions, yet is sufficiently generalized to overarch and integrate these institutions during times of national crisis.

Robert Bellah

Using a definition of differentiation which is similar to that of Parsons, Robert Bellah (1964) has developed a theory of religious evolution based on differentiation. Bellah traces the course of religious change through five ideal typical historical stages: (1) primitive religion (primarily
Australian religions); (2) archaic religion (religions of Africa, Polynesia, and early religions of the Middle East and China); (3) historic religion (transcendental religion including Judaism, Islam, and early Christianity); (4) early modern religion (the Protestant Reformation); and (5) modern religion (post-Reformation religions in Western nations).

The major evolutionary process which Bellah specifies is differentiation. Through the five successive stages, the evolution of religious symbol systems moves from compact to differentiated forms, the self becomes differentiated from the world, and religious institutions become differentiated from other institutions (Bellah, 1964:358). Bellah's five stages and the indicators of differentiation for each stage are summarized in figure 6.

Although Bellah does not mention American civil religion in his general treatment of religious evolution, he makes several observations which can aid the construction of a theory of the differentiation of American civil religion. Bellah sets the stage of original church-state differentiation in the period of historic religion. Prior to this stage, religious and political institutions were not clearly differentiated. The Protestant Reformation of the early modern period initiated the uneasy religious pluralism of Europe which partially motivated American settlement by members of Protestant sects. At the same time that this structural differentiation of religious institutions was occurring, religious symbol systems were multiplying. According to
### RELIGIOUS STAGE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>INDICATORS OF DIFFERENTIATION</th>
<th>PRIMITIVE (Most examples drawn from Australian religion)</th>
<th>ARCHAIC (Religions of Africa, Polynesia, and early religions of Middle East, India, and China)</th>
<th>HISTORIC (Transcendental religions--Islam, Judaism, Early Christianity, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious Organization</td>
<td>No religious organization exists apart from society</td>
<td>Emergence of the cult</td>
<td>Emergence of differentiated religious collectivities, including church-state differentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Symbol Systems</td>
<td>Monistic--religious myths overlap significantly with daily life activity</td>
<td>The beginnings of dualism in the objectification of mythic beings</td>
<td>Dualistic--natural and supernatural worlds are separated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-World Relationship</td>
<td>Fusion of self with myth in ritual</td>
<td>Increased distinction between humans and gods</td>
<td>Clearly structured self-concept emerges to face transcendent reality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 6. Bellah's Stages of Religious Evolution (Bellah, 1964)  
(Continued on next page)
### RELIGIOUS STAGE

**INDICATORS OF DIFFERENTIATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Organization</th>
<th>EARLY MODERN (Protestant Reformation)</th>
<th>MODERN (Post-Reformation religion in Western nations)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rejection of religious hierarchy (papal authority) and establishment of a &quot;religious two-class system: elect and reprobates&quot; (369)</td>
<td>Denominational pluralism and privatization of religion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus upon the direct relationship between the individual and transcendent reality</td>
<td>Multiple symbol systems open to individual selection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This-worldly orientation of self-involvement</td>
<td>Multi-dimensional self, conceived of as capable of transforming both self and world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Fig. 6. Bellah's Stages of Religious Evolution** (Bellah, 1964) (Continued)
Bellah, modern religion represents a distinctive evolutionary state in which traditional religious worldviews were challenged, first by the rational ethics of Kant and later by humanism. Bellah views this process as one of evolution from primitive monism, through historical dualism to a modern structure of infinite possibilities. The modern effects of differentiation include the "collapse of meaning" and the "failure of moral standards"; yet in Bellah's view there are also "unprecedented opportunities for creative innovation in every sphere of human action" (Bellah, 1964: 373-374). One such religious innovation which could be seen as congruent with the differentiation of religious organizations and symbol systems is the emergence of a differentiated American civil religion. According to Bellah (1975), the symbols of American civil religion emerged initially in the parallel religious and political ideologies of the New England Calvinists. Bellah's analysis does not set the differentiation of American civil religion at any one point in American history, but cites the reemergence and reaffirmation of civil religious themes throughout history, especially during national times of trial.

John A. Coleman

Coleman's (1970) theory of the differentiation of American civil religion, from which Proposition II is derived, is logically consistent with the assumptions of both Parsons (1971) and Bellah (1964) concerning differentiation of
Coleman draws upon Bellah's (1964) religious evolutionary stages to illustrate the differentiation of contemporary civil religion from both religious and political communities. It is Coleman's thesis, borrowed from Bellah (1967), that civil religion is "the essential middle term" necessary for the understanding of church-state differentiation (Coleman, 1970:68). In the stages of primitive and archaic religions, society, religion, and civil religion are observed to be undifferentiated. In historic or early modern religious systems, church-state separation begins to be observable for the first time. Although political and religious organizations become differentiated, often posing conflicts of interest, forms of civil religion are not yet differentiated. Civil religion may be controlled either by religious organizations or by the state. In modern societies, civil religion may be observed in one of three forms: (1) continuing to be undifferentiated, and sponsored by either religion or the state; (2) holding monopoly status as a form of secular nationalism; or (3) differentiated civil religion controlled neither by religious organizations nor by the state (Coleman, 1970:69).

**Type 1: Continued undifferentiated civil religion**

Coleman suggests that just because civil religion appears to be undifferentiated within a society, its absence should not be assumed. In these cases, the functions of civil religion will be performed either by religious or
political organizations. Civil religion will appear either as "Church-Sponsored Civil Religion" or "State-Sponsored Civil Religion" (Coleman, 1970:70).

Church-sponsored civil religion

In cases where an established religious tradition provides the context for sacred civic symbols, civil religion may be said to be church-sponsored. The church "lends ritual to coronations of emperors and kings and adapts its doctrine of providence to questions of national destiny" (Coleman, 1970:70). The Christian-sponsored divine right of kings exemplifies church-sponsored civil religion. Modern examples of church-sponsorship in the Judaic and Islamic traditions include modern Israel and the Khomeini government of Iran. In these cases a differentiated civil religion is not discernible, as political and religious symbols systems are intertwined under the sponsorship of a dominant religious tradition. Other examples of church-sponsorship of civil religion "can be found throughout Latin America, in the Orthodoxy of Greece, in Buddhism in Ceylon" (Coleman, 1970:70). Internal conflict, endemic to societies in which an institutionalized religion performs the functions of civil religion, includes strains created by the pressures of religious minorities and the likelihood that the traditional religion may be resistant to modernizing trends (Coleman, 1970:71).
state-sponsored civil religion

Civil religion sponsored by the state, exemplified by Imperial Rome and Restoration Japan, is evidenced in cases where the political system institutes a nationally self-transcendent cult. Structural weaknesses of civil religion dominated by the state, observable in the Roman and Japanese cases, include the problem of value specificity which challenges the values of competing religious organizations. There may also be problems of rigidity associated with self-transcendence (Coleman, 1970:72).

Type 2: Secular nationalism

Coleman views secular nationalism as a functional alternative to civil religion to the extent that secular nationalism provides a legitimating symbol system which competes with the symbol system of religious organizations.

Secular nationalism arises as the alternative source of civil religion when the historic national religion is either too traditionalistic or too closely tied to prerevolutionary regimes to serve as the civil religion of a modernizing politico-economic regime (Coleman, 1970:72).

The secular nationalism of the U.S.S.R. is a prime example cited. Other examples include Turkey after Ataturk's revolution and the Third Republic of France. The strains inherent in secular nationalism as a replacement for civil religion include persecution of religious citizens and limitations on religious and civil liberties. Secular nationalism can also be weakened, as in the case of the Third
Republic of France, when its adherents are restricted to an elite group (Coleman, 1970:72).

**Type 3: Differentiated civil religion**

Coleman relies directly on Bellah's (1964) evolutionary assumptions to predict the emergence of a differentiated form of civil religion in the most institutionally differentiated societies. The United States is such a differentiated society, characterized both by church-state separation and religious pluralism. The differentiation of these structures makes religious or state domination of civil religion virtually impossible. Secular nationalism is also an unlikely choice for the United States, if Sidney Mead (1967) is correct in his portrayal of the transcendent quality of the traditional American conception of civil faith. Thus, Coleman concludes that, in the United States, "we find almost a unique case of civil religion differentiated from both church and state" (Coleman, 1970:74).

Conrad Cherry

Coleman's conclusion, that American civil religion has emerged as an institutionalized religious symbol system, differentiated from both religious and political communities, does not stand alone in sociological theory and research. The differentiation of American civil religion from the American denominations has been observed by several contemporary sociologists. Bellah's (1974a:21) model of transcendent universal American civil religion assumes that in the United
States civil religion is "elaborate and well institutionalized" and "rather clearly differentiated from the churches." Bellah cites the 1961 Kennedy inaugural address as an example of how civil statements can be religious, yet nondenominational. Conrad Cherry (1971) believes that the differentiation of American civil religion from the American denominations is a recent, mid-twentieth century development. During the early history of the nation, and continuing into the twentieth century, the values of American civil religion were usually expressed in Protestant terms by Protestant spokesmen, resulting in an American civil religion which largely reflected Protestant civic piety. But the American tradition of religious pluralism, advocated by most of the Protestant denominations, opened the way for the differentiation of alternative religious systems.

Only after Protestantism lost its powerful grip on the public life of the nation did the civil religion begin to dislodge itself from Protestant articulation and custody. . . . It took such factors as the impact of non-Protestant immigrants, a Supreme Court determined to de-Protestantize the public schools, and a pluralization of values in many religions of American life through modern means of communication to break through this confusion of Protestantism and the religion of America (Cherry, 1971:15).

Franklin Littell agrees with Cherry and Bellah that immigration and the fairly recent ascendancy of non-Protestants to positions of national power mark the point of differentiation of American civil religion from Protestant civic piety.
Not until the modern period when Catholics and Jews and others have come into full and unabashed participation in the public life of the nation, as symbolized by the 1960 election, has the old Protestant culture-religion been frontally challenged (Littell, 1967:33).

The origin and early history of American civil religion is located within and dominated by the Protestant tradition. Yet contemporary American civil religion, whether viewed as folk religion or as the transcendent universal religion of the nation, is portrayed as a belief system which has become differentiated from Protestantism and has been sufficiently generalized to include Americans from varying religious traditions.

Perhaps as a by-product of its differentiated status in relation to other American religious organizations, American civil religion has existed "in a relationship of tension" to some other American religions (Cherry, 1971:16). A major example of this relationship of tension is found in the rejection of civil religion's symbols and ceremonies by sects such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, whose members refuse to salute the American flag or pledge allegiance to the nation. Martin and Peterson (1978) find, for example, that members of American sects such as Assembly of God, Seventh Day Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses display lower levels of civil religiosity, as measured by opinion items, than members of more established denominations. Members of these sects reject American civil religion as a religious option, and the values of American civil religion are not sufficiently general to avoid conflict with the sectarian values of these
particular organizations. The very generalization of values, a process Parsons (1971) observes as accompanying the differentiation of a new social form, has been a source of conflict between American civil religion and traditional American denominations. Articulate American churchmen, such as Marty and Eckhardt, have condemned American civil religion as an "American Shinto," or at best as a watered-down religion-in-general. Marty (1959) criticizes what he sees as American civil religion's banality, emphasis on conformity, and tendencies toward national idolatry. Churchmen like Marty have viewed American civil religion as a poor substitute for a theologically rigorous denominational religion. Whether or not Martin Marty's folk religion model of American civil religion is accepted by contemporary scholars, the degree to which American churchmen have perceived American civil religion as a threat to traditional religion is an indicator of the degree to which American civil religion has differentiated as a separate, potentially competing, religious system in American society.

**Empirical Studies**

Samuel Mueller and Paul Sites

An empirical study by Samuel Mueller and Paul Sites (Mueller and Sites, 1977; Sites and Mueller, 1978) provides relevant data concerning the contemporary relationship between American civil religion and the American religious denominations. Data consist of tape recordings of religious
services from a simple random sample of one-third of all churches in a metropolitan area of 500,000 (Akron, Ohio). The religious services were recorded on Sunday, July 4, 1976, the day of the American Bicentennial celebration. Analysis of data revealed that fifty-seven out of sixty Bicentennial services contained mention of the relationship between America's role in history and the conditions of ultimate reality. Sites and Mueller (1978:9) describe the modal Bicentennial sermon:

The modal sermon began with a historical recounting of the birth of the nation along with a discussion of its religious foundation. After this, and a brief discussion of the blessings the nation has received from God, the clergy either began listing specific threats to the American heritage and/or gave a more general and abstract warning concerning the problems which threaten the nation.

The symbols and themes of American civil religion appeared equally in sermons given across all churches in the sample, including Protestant and Catholic churches, black and white churches, and among ethnic churches. Some denominational differences were observed, but no denomination strayed outside the core set of civil religious values as defined by Bellah (1975). For example, a comparison of sermons given in Lutheran and Presbyterian churches revealed that in both denominations clergy stressed a basic set of civil religious values which asked similar questions and arrived at similar answers about the role of America in history. Denominational differences were manifest at the level of language choice and theological context of the sermons, as sermons reflected each
denomination's theological heritage and own "denomination-specific set of idioms" (Mueller and Sites, 1976:12). Lutheran sermons, for example, reflected the doctrine of the "two kingdoms," while Presbyterian sermons sought the establishment of the Calvinist "kingdom of God on earth." Because denominational and ethnic differences were not substantial, Mueller and Sites (1976:11) concluded that their data offered some limited support for Bellah's thesis that American civil religion exists, and that American civil religion transcends specific religious denominations.

How are Mueller and Sites's findings to be interpreted with regard to Coleman's structural differentiation thesis, and Proposition II', which proposes that American civil religion is structurally differentiated from the religious community? The findings, that the values of American civil religion are manifest in the religious services of the American denominations, could be interpreted as a disconfirmation of the structural differentiation thesis. If the denominations espouse the values of American civil religion, can religious and civil religious systems be seen as differentiated? Careful examination of the data, however, reveals that the values of American civil religion and denominational values expressed in the sampled sermons are held at different levels of generality. Mueller and Sites's findings are consistent with Parsons's (1971) theory of the congruence of differentiation and value generalization. Mueller and Sites found evidence of civil religious values which were differentiated
from denominational theology, yet couched at a sufficiently high level of generality to overarch denominational differences. The findings are also supportive of Coleman's thesis and Proposition II. When the values of American civil religion are found to be manifest at a high enough level of generality within institutions with more particularistic value systems, it can be assumed that denominational and civil religious values are differentiated from one another, although the two sets of values may at the same time be generally congruent. This combination allows for an American civil religion which is differentiated from the particularism of denominational theology, yet is sufficiently universal to overarch and integrate these institutions at the societal level.

Ronald Wimberly

Two recent empirical studies conducted by Ronald Wimberly (Wimberly et al., 1976; Wimberly, 1976) also lend support to Proposition II, which states that American civil religion is structurally differentiated both from religious and political communities in the United States. Wimberly conducted two separate surveys of individual religious, political, and civil religious beliefs. (The methodological details of both studies are discussed in chapter VI, pages 94-96.) Factor analysis of data taken from the first survey (which did not include a measure of political belief) revealed four distinct first order factors: civil religion,
religious belief, religious behavior, and religious experience. Second order factoring revealed that, while the civil religion dimension was positively correlated with several first order dimensions of denominational religiosity, the civil religious dimension remained distinct. Wimberly interprets his findings as an indication of the existence of a separate, civil religious dimension which is differentiated, at least at the level of individual belief, from denominational religious belief (Wimberly et al., 1976:894-898).

Wimberly's second sample, which was larger and more heterogeneous than the first, was surveyed on items of political belief as well as religious and civil religious belief. Factoring of the religious and civil religious items produced the same four factors which emerged in the previous study. Rotation of the first order factors produced an interpretation similar to that of the first study: civil religion is a religious dimension distinct from denominational religion. Higher order analyses, however, indicated that the religious and civil religious dimensions were more closely associated in the second sample than in the first.

Once more, Bellah's contention of a differentiated civil religious dimension is supported in regard to several church dimensions. However, with this more heterogeneous sample, the second order civil religious factors are found to lie closer to church religion than they did in the crusade data. This implies that in a more diverse population, there is less distinction between civil religion and religion in general (Wimberly, 1976:345).

Factor analysis of the second survey also revealed that civil religion items factored distinctly away from political items.
second order analysis found that civil religion and political belief stayed together on one factor, and away from other political items (public behavior, social interaction, experience, private behavior, and political knowledge) (Wimberly, 1976:346-347). Thus, the civil religious dimension was found by Wimberly to be differentiated from both the religious and political dimensions of individual belief, as measured by the survey items.

Wimberly's findings offer empirical support for both the civil religion hypothesis of Bellah and Coleman (summarized in Proposition I) and the structural differentiation hypothesis of Coleman (Proposition II). Wimberly's data suggest that American civil religion does exist to the extent that it is indicated by individual beliefs concerning the citizen's and the society's role in relation to conditions of ultimate meaning. With respect to the structural differentiation hypothesis, American civil religion is found to be a separate, individual belief dimension which overlaps minimally with individual beliefs concerning denominational religion and politics. Wimberly's findings should stimulate additional research efforts which will add further information concerning the relationship of American civil religious beliefs with other religious beliefs and political attitudes of Americans. Only through additional research on American belief systems and their location within American institutions will the structural differentiation hypothesis be confirmed or disconfirmed.
CHAPTER IX

THE FUNCTIONS OF AMERICAN CIVIL RELIGION

In the previous chapters it has been proposed that American civil religion is a religious symbol system and an aspect of the American religious dimension. It has additionally been proposed that American civil religion is structurally differentiated from its closest institutional neighbors, the American religious denominations and the American political community. These two assumptions lead logically to a third proposition, that American civil religion performs functions traditionally performed by religious symbol systems, but that these functions are performed within the distinct province of civil religion's influence: the roles of the citizen and the society in relation to conditions of ultimate reality. Proposition III states the hypothesis of functional differentiation, which logically follows from the structural differentiation hypothesis discussed in the previous chapter.

Proposition III

American civil religion performs specialized religious functions performed neither by church nor state.

In order to determine if American civil religion performs a specialized version of the functions performed by
other religious symbol systems, it is necessary to determine and clarify the function of religion for society. Although the functions of religion have been conceived of and expressed by sociologists of religion in various terms, three functions would most likely be acknowledged as important indicators of religion's force in society: (1) the integrative role of religion; (2) the legitimating role of religion; and (3) the prophetic role of religion. These three functions of religion partially overlap with one another in the everyday life of the society, but can be separately analyzed. The functions of religion for the individual, such as providing values for identity formation and personal meaning creation are acknowledged, but will not be explored in detail here.

**Religion as a Source of Integration**

The observation that religion may act as a source of integration stems from the Durkheimian tradition. Durkheim defined religion according to this function as "... a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things ... which unite into one single moral community ... all who adhere to them" (Durkheim, 1965:62). Durkheim identified the integrating function of religion in a primitive, undifferentiated society in which members manifested their interdependence through moral bonds, strengthened by religion. The absence of religion would weaken these bonds and reduce the cohesion of society. As Kingsley Davis (1950:143) states,
It is the possession of common ultimate ends that gives the key to the integration of ends in human societies. . . . As between two different groups holding an entirely different set of common ultimate ends, there is no recourse.

Modern societies are structurally differentiated and frequently religiously plural, factors which call into question the integrative power of religion. Phillip Hammond (1974) argues that Durkheim fails to go beyond the primitive stage of mechanical solidarity to account for modern religious forms such as pluralism. Hammond agrees with Durkheim that in undifferentiated societies with mechanical solidarity integration is expressed in religious sentiments. But Hammond concludes that the integrating function of religion is an inadequate explanation of organic solidarity characteristic of religiously plural societies such as the United States. Hammond would reword Durkheim's thesis to state that rather than religion producing the cohesive society, cohesion is perceived to have a religious quality. Because conflict threatens societal cohesion, institutions which resolve conflict in modern societies will also take on religious qualities. In religiously plural societies, the function of conflict resolution moves away from the domain of the churches and under the control of legal institutions.

(1) Plurality of religious systems requires redefinition of order but does not escape the need for order. (2) Legal institutions therefore are called upon not only to secure order but to give it a uniformly acceptable meaning as well. (3) The result is a set of legal institutions with a decided religio-moral character (Hammond, 1974:129).
In Hammond's view, the legal structures of modern society become the new source of moral integration. Hammond (1974:129-134) presents data from United States Supreme Court decisions to support his thesis of the "religio-moral character" of legal institutions and concludes that the religious qualities now attributed to the legal system are most clearly evidenced in American civil religion and institutionalized in national documents.

American Civil Religion and Integration

Determining the integrative potential of religion or its functional alternatives in a differentiated society is an important task for the sociologist of civil religion. If the integrating function of religion cannot be demonstrated in a differentiated society, sociologists like Richard Penn (1976) can argue that no overarching religious tradition can unite members and institutions. If, as Hammond suggests, religious functions and meanings shift to differentiating institutions such as the legal system, the possibility of new sources of integration remains open. American civil religion could be a modern, differentiated religious dimension potentially capable of contributing to social integration at times of societal strain or conflict. Bellah's model of American civil religion, which stresses the unifying potential of American civil religion during times of national crisis, maintains that just such a religious dimension is now institutionalized in the United States.
Coleman's (1970) elaboration of Bellah's model of transcendent universal American civil religion assumes that American civil religion performs an integrating function. "By definition civil religion is a religious system given to the social integration of society by providing for "national identity and solidarity" (Coleman, 1970:76). Coleman bases his assumption that civil religion is integrating "by definition" on Durkheim's classic definition of religion. In a subsequent proposition, Coleman (1970:76) goes so far as to state that, if it can be shown that civil religion and organized religion perform differing functions for society, "it is an empirical question whether organized religion is integrative or divisive in society." In Coleman's view, where civil religion is sufficiently differentiated, it may displace organized religion as a primary institutional source of societal cohesion. Thus, for Coleman the empirical question becomes one of determining whether or not denominational religion still provides any integration for modern society. Coleman is the only American civil religion theorist who takes such an extreme position on the integrative function of American civil religion. More typical are the more moderate positions of N. J. Demerath II and Phillip Hammond (1967) and Robert Bellah (1975) which propose that American civil religion has integrative potential but evidence of the actual performance of integration must be left open to empirical determination.
Demerath and Hammond (1967:202-204) point out that determining the role of religion for American social integration is complicated by the tendency of Americans to assume that "religion" and "denominational religion" are synonymous. American sociologists can easily fall under the assumption that the only religious symbol systems are denominational systems, and that religion functions only through organized, denominational structures. When the institution of religion is equated with the denomination, sociologists such as Richard Penn (1972) question whether the diversity of denominations can function to integrate a plural society. Penn's conclusion, which Robert Stauffer (1973:415) calls the "end of ideology" thesis, portrays modern society as lacking the social structures to support moral integration (see also Luckmann, 1967). An alternative conclusion is suggested by Demerath and Hammond (1967:205) who suggest that modern society may have "alternative structural arrangements" for performing integration. Demerath and Hammond propose that American civil religion is one such structural alternative for integration in American society. They attribute the development of civil religion in modern societies to "structural circumstances, specifically differentiation and pluralism which force the separate institutionalization of the essentially pragmatic from the essentially philosophic aspects of religion" (Demerath and Hammond, 1967:208-209). In a religiously plural society, cognitive religious sentiments become
structured apart from ethical religious sentiments. The former become institutionalized in religious organizations; the latter, "the rules of general ethical conduct, become institutionalized chiefly in the religio-political realm . . ." (Demerath and Hammond, 1967:210). Demerath and Hammond believe that it is the differentiated American civil religion which now performs the function of integration for the modern United States.

If we now return to the basic Durkheimian issue of religion in the role of societal integration, it is probably correct to view America's civil religion as the proper analogue to the Arunta religion of which Durkheim wrote. Religion, broadly conceived, does play a role in integrating society, but such religion is not to be confused with "churches" as they are commonly identified (Demerath and Hammond, 1967:211).

The integrative function of American civil religion is attributed, in part, to the inability of religious organization to agree theologically to provide sufficient unity concerning America's ultimate ends. American civil religion provides a source of religious unity in the midst of denominational and theological diversity (Demerath and Hammond, 1967:212).

Richard Fenn

The position of Richard Fenn on the integrative functions of civil religion has been discussed in detail in chapter VI, pages 77-86, in the analysis of Fenn's response to Bellah's model of American civil religion. Fenn views modern society as structurally differentiated beyond the capacities of religious systems to offer any overarching
normative basis of integration. Several of Fenn's propositions concerning differentiation and its effects on religion serve as a summary of Fenn's position.

1. There is a high degree of differentiation within the cultural system, within the structural system, and between the two levels of the system.

2. Instead of a single, overarching religious basis to the moral order or orders of a society, there is a plurality of systems of ultimate significance.

3. To the extent that these several systems of ultimate significance are institutionalized in differentiated structures and internalized in personality systems, they provide the sources of ideological conflict in modern society (Fenn, 1970:135).

Fenn admits that the existence of ideological conflict does not necessarily imply structural conflict. But American conflicts are typically solved according to pragmatic criteria rather than by moral directives.

The American system is distinguished by its capacity to slough off cultural conflict and to base structural relationships on proximate rather than ultimate concerns. To admit this, however, is to concur on an important characteristic of modern secular society: there is too great a cultural diversity to constitute a moral order. Morals there may be, but no order . . . (Fenn, 1970:136).

Fenn believes that moral choices exist for the individual in modern society, but that there is no overarching normative system which integrates individuals into a similar pattern of meaning and ultimate ends. Fenn would agree with Demerath and Hammond that traditional religious symbol systems no longer serve as primary sources of integration for modern society, but disagrees that civil religion is capable of assuming the function of integration.

Fenn proposes that American civil religion may also be viewed as differentiated into two types: personal civil
religion, which assists the identity development of individuals, and societal civil religion, which is supposed to combine national and biblical symbols to integrate corporate actors into the social system. Fenn (1976:165) suggests that societal civil religion may have existed in the nineteenth century, when Judeo-Christian and democratic values combined to integrate the individual into America's newly emerging social structures. Under contemporary conditions of increased differentiation "the nation's authority is deprived of the support of ultimate ends or of significance for the identity of the individual. . . . The nation does not have a unique identity and purpose which incorporates the individual" (Fenn, 1976:166). American civil religion fails in Fenn's analysis to provide a sufficient moral basis for social integration.

The differing positions of Fenn (1970; 1976), Coleman (1970), and Demerath and Hammond (1967) are evidence of the debate concerning the integrative role of American civil religion in the contemporary United States. Fenn is convinced that American civil religion can no longer integrate citizens, while Coleman and Demerath and Hammond see American civil religion deposing traditional religious systems and becoming the major source of moral integration for modern society. The integration debate seems to be a theoretical controversy of extremes: the "end of ideology" hypothesized by Fenn versus the transposition of ideology hypothesized by Coleman and Demerath and Hammond. Two additional voices in
the debate, Conrad Cherry (1970; 1971) and Robert Bellah (1975; 1976a) suggest mediating positions concerning the integration hypothesis.

Conrad Cherry

Cherry's (1970) symbolic study of American cults of the dead led him to conclude that American civil religion performs both integrative and divisive functions for American society. In early America, the funeral services of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams performed integrative functions for the new nation, but by 1968 the funeral services of Robert Kennedy were both unifying and divisive for the society. Due to America's class, regional, and racial pluralism, certain groups react differently to the symbols of American civil religion. Cherry notes that some groups saw Kennedy's death as evidence that national values had failed to unite all citizens. Cherry (1971:19) raises an important issue when he asks how inclusive American civil religion can be in a pluralistic society. Can American civil religion, for example, include atheism and integrate atheistic citizens? How can American civil religion support the democratic principle opposed to the exclusion of any group and still maintain transcendent ideals? Can the values of American civil religion, which originated in Protestant civic piety, truly integrate America's racial and religious minorities? And can these same values, developed within a particular national tradition, have international
integrative potential as Bellah (1974b) maintains (Cherry, 1971:19-20)? Despite these questions and the divisions they may represent, Cherry would not agree with Penn that American civil religion entirely fails to integrate American society. Although modern American civil religion is differentiated along regional, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines, American civil religion constitutes a "national point of view" which may be both integrative and divisive (Cherry, 1970:310). Cherry's analysis is useful in pointing out the sources of divisiveness in American society, but fails to suggest the conditions under which American civil religion may be expected to be either integrative or divisive.

Robert Bellah

Bellah (1974a:29) has defined American civil religion as an institutionalized collection of sacred beliefs about American society which provides integration through times of national crisis. Bellah has selected the biblical image of "covenant" to symbolize the integrative function of American civil religion. The American covenant refers to a normative symbol system, separate from the actual social behavior of Americans. Bellah does not maintain that the potential for unity found in the American covenant has always been fulfilled. Instead, the history of America is a history of the "broken covenant." "The Pilgrim Fathers had a conception of the covenant and of virtue which we badly need today. But almost from the moment they touched American soil they broke that
covenant and engaged in unvirtuous actions" (Bellah, 1975:xv). For example, early Americans violated the concept of covenant through their policies toward the American Indian and in the institutionalization of slavery. In times of war, American civil religion has not always played an integrative role. "In both the Revolution and the Civil War commitment to the tenets of the civil religion led not to 'social integration' but to war and the near destruction of the nation" (Bellah, 1976a:154). In modern society racism and economic inequality remain primary sources of national division. Bellah would agree with Cherry that American civil religion has the potential both for integration and division, but unlike Cherry, Bellah has a partial explanation for the societal divisions which exist despite the institutionalization of American civil religion. Bellah sees divisions occurring along ideological lines when the transcendent universal values of American civil religion are interpreted by various segments of society in terms of their own theologies or ideologies. For example, there is "the theology of cultural sophisticates and the theology of Bible-believing Christians" (Bellah, 1976a:155). Protestants, Catholics, and Jews may also vary in their interpretations of American civil religion. According to Bellah, "there are many public theologies, but only one civil religion" (Bellah, 1976a:155). Varying ideologies, such as those of different political parties, may also emerge. Bellah notes that in some societies the competition among theology, ideology, and civil religion may result in
deep societal division. In the United States such extreme divisions have been largely avoided (with the exception of the Civil War) because "the civil religion has never been universally shared but it has seldom if ever been faced with clearly formulated and massively popular alternatives, though it is possible that that is coming" (Bellah, 1976a:155). Therefore, American civil religion is not integrative by definition. American civil religion can foster integration only under the conditions of limited competition from alternative theological and ideological systems.

Unlike Coleman, who assumes that American civil religion integrates society, and unlike Penn, who assumes that it does not, Bellah allows the question of American civil religion and integration to remain empirically open. As an ideal symbol system, transcendent universal American civil religion offers a moral basis of integration. Under actual historical and social conditions, American civil religion may succeed or fail to provide a source of social unity. But as long as the possibility of integration based on American civil religion exists, Bellah's view of American society must differ drastically from that of Penn. Commenting on Penn's description of the collapse of the American moral order, Bellah observes that Penn's argument implies that an entirely new system of social relations has emerged in the United States.

If American society is a mere "political and geographical shell"; if for most Americans "the society itself is taken into account only as a means to the individual's ends"; if corporate actors have monopolized the power in our society so that individual persons are
powerless and cannot even find justice in our legal system, if, finally, Professor Penn is right in his comment that "American society is more accurately conceived not as a single system but as two: one belonging to corporate actors, and the other to persons," then the republic of Washington and Jefferson and Lincoln has ceased to exist. The "ancient faith" is gone, and it is only a matter of time, probably of very brief time, before our laws reflect the new reality. That new reality, if Penn is to be believed, is technocratic, corporate despotism (Bellah, 1976a:157).

Bellah calls upon Penn to provide empirical evidence for the "end of ideology" thesis. If, as Penn maintains, American society lacks sources of moral integration, it is up to Penn to document this change and demonstrate how a society so divided can still stand.

Religion as a Source of Legitimation

One way which religion serves to integrate society is through the legitimation of a moral order which binds adherents. Peter Berger (1967:29) defines legitimation as "socially objectified knowledge that serves to explain and justify the social order." If members of a society do not share common definitions of reality, integration becomes problematic. Max Weber recognized the link between legitimation and integration. "Conduct, especially social conduct, and quite particularly a social relationship, can be oriented on the part of actors toward the idea of the existence of a legitimate order" (Weber, 1947:124). Because societies attempt to legitimize their institutional arrangements in terms of an ultimate set of values, legitimation falls within the realm of religion. Religion serves as a legitimating
agent in social life by providing an ultimate system of meaning for social behavior. The link between religious legitimation and social order is summarized by Weber.

Wherever the direction of the whole way of life has been methodically rationalized (or systematized) it has been profoundly determined by the ultimate values toward which this rationalization has been oriented. These values and points of view were thus religiously conditioned (Weber, 1958:286-287).

Contemporary sociologist Peter Berger (1967:32) observes that religion is not the only institutional source of legitimation, but historically religion has played an extensive and effective role in "world-maintenance."

In primitive and archaic societies, in which there is no differentiation between religious and political institutions, the political order is typically viewed as a manifestation of the sacred realm. Those in political power are conceived of as gods, or as representatives of a supreme power. Berger (1967:34) calls this the "microcosm/macrocosm scheme of legitimation" because the primitive or archaic society tends to view itself as a microcosm of the larger cosmic order. In modern societies the microcosm/macrocosm relationship tends to break down with the advent of increased societal complexity. Separation of church and state may result in the competition of religious and political systems of legitimation. Berger (1967:47) proposes that "the less firm the plausibility structure becomes, the more acute will be the need for world-maintaining legitimation." Complex systems of legitimation tend to emerge in situations where
interpretations of reality are being challenged by alternatives. Modern American society is characterized by the differentiation of religious and political communities and by religious pluralism. Religious pluralism in particular creates a situation in which religious systems of legitimation are in competition with one another. Pluralism, according to Berger (1967:49) causes a "social engineering" problem for religious organizations which must compete with one another's worldviews, and for society itself, which must find ways of integrating individuals and organizations with differing conceptions of reality. Modern society, faced with the erosion of traditional meaning systems due to pluralism and the resultant competition, has an increased need for legitimating systems. Whether or not a plausibility structure such as civil religion can provide the solution to modern society's need for legitimation is the subject of debate among sociologists of civil religion.

**American Civil Religion and Legitimation**

The major participants in the debate over the legitimating potential of American civil religion are Robert Bellah, Richard Fenn, and Robert Stauffer. Bellah's model of American civil religion is based on the Durkheimian assumption that social cohesion rests upon common moral understandings based on religious meaning structures. These moral and religious meaning systems provide an explanation and justification of the universe.
Such moral and religious understandings produce both a basic cultural legitimation for a society which is viewed at least approximately in accord with them and a standard of judgement for the criticism of a society that is seen as deviating too far from them (Bellah, 1975:ix).

Bellah assumes that religious symbol systems contain the potential for integration, legitimation, and prophetic guidance. Bellah believes that American civil religion performed the function of legitimation for early American society, and carries the potential for renewal of this function in contemporary times.

In the eighteenth century . . . there was a common set of religious and moral understandings rooted in a conception of a divine order under a Christian, or at least a deist, God. The basic moral norms that were seen as deriving from that divine order were liberty, justice, and charity, understood in a context of theological and moral discourse which led to a concept of personal virtue as the essential basis of a good society (Bellah, 1975:x).

Bellah admits that the legitimating power of these American values has eroded. The concept of "virtue," for example, has a different meaning for the twentieth century American than for the eighteenth century Puritan. Yet alongside moral erosion has come renewal. Contemporary Americans retain the value of individual freedom, and the concepts of liberty and justice inform the society's treatment of minorities and women to a greater extent today than in earlier times. In Bellah's view, the myths and symbols of American civil religion retain the power to help Americans interpret and legitimize their social experience in the light of transcendent reality (Bellah, 1975:3).
Richard Fenn

Richard Fenn, who argues that American society has no society-wide source of moral integration, additionally assumes that no religiously-based societal source of legitimation exists. In Fenn's view, modern religion provides little beyond a set of personalized meaning structures lacking any societal function. Personal civil religion may provide meaning for individual identity development, but societal civil religion, which could provide a system of cultural legitimation, no longer operates in contemporary American life. American institutions are guided instead by criteria of functional rationality, which have no religious basis. "Americans may no longer be able to agree on ultimate ends, or what is worth doing, but only what is feasible or 'appropriate'" (Fenn, 1972:18).

Robert Stauffer

Robert Stauffer (1973) critiques the privatistic "end of ideology" view of Fenn. Stauffer suggests that even a technically efficient means-oriented society requires the operation of some underlying cultural interpretation of the form by which means are accomplished. Max Weber's definition of legal rationality is recalled as one such type of cultural legitimation (Stauffer, 1973:419). In Stauffer's view, Fenn has overlooked the fact that a technocratic political system requires its own legitimating worldview, and that functional rationality itself is a legitimating system of meaning. In
addition, Stauffer believes that privatists such as Fenn overlook the possibility that social strains may create a demand for new forms of legitimation. One potential strain could occur as the Protestant Ethic work values clash with the economic requirement for limited participation in the labor force. "Fenn's sanguine implication that the society, presumably through expert management, will be able to adjust to structurally induced unemployment is dubious indeed" (Stauffer, 1973:421). Stauffer sees differentiation and the resultant ideological debate characteristic of modern society to be fertile ground for the emergence of new ideological systems of legitimation. Stauffer would not argue with Fenn on the importance of the private sphere of religion. Stauffer would retain, however, the recognition that "both persistent and new forms of overarching cultural legitimations . . . do exist" (Stauffer, 1973:422). Stauffer would include American civil religion among the potentially persistent forms of overarching cultural legitimation. Although Stauffer questions the prophetic function attributed to American civil religion by Bellah, he finds Bellah's work to be a useful model for the identification of modern legitimating systems which emerge in response to national strains.
Religion as a Source of Prophecy

The study of religion's prophetic role originated in the Weberian tradition which distinguished between the priestly and prophetic styles of religious leadership. As Weber (1963) notes, the distinction between priestly and prophetic styles extends beyond religious leadership into the whole symbol system of a religion. Contemporary sociologist Bellah (1975:ix-xi) writes of the prophetic role of religious values as "a standard of judgement for the criticism of a society which is deviating too far from them" and as exerting "continuous pressure for higher standards of moral behavior." Demerath and Hammond (1967:212) subdivide religious prophecy into several dimensions. Prophetic influence may be direct or indirect, innovative or supportive of the status quo. Demerath and Hammond (1967:224) observe that "much of what passes for prophecy is really reinforcement of existing sentiment." In addition, it is useful to distinguish between prophetic attempts and successes. The sociologist studying the prophetic function of religion needs to be concerned with the conditions which facilitate or resist prophecy, and variations in prophetic impact, such as amount and direction of change (Demerath and Hammond, 1967:223).

The prophetic role may be assumed to be linked to religion's integrative and legitimating roles. A direct and positive relationship among the three functions could be logically proposed. To the extent that a society is legitimized and integrated by a common set of moral understandings, the
greater would be the prophetic potential of these same moral values. Values which have the power to inform and unite would also have the power to judge deviation and demand behavior in conformity to higher standards. Bellah (1975:ix) assumes that this basic "relation between morality, religion, legitimation, and criticism" exists within social systems. Demerath and Hammond, however, assume an inverse relationship between integration and prophecy, at least within the context of a particular religious organization. It is assumed that the more tightly moral values bind a social group, the less likely the status quo will be challenged, as such a challenge would threaten to destroy the very order on which the group is based. Referring to religious organizations, Demerath and Hammond (1969:230) note:

... Such an integrative role militates against vigorous pursuit of the second major religious function, that of religious prophecy in the interests of social change. There is a very real sense in which the functions of integration and prophecy are hostile to one another within the contemporary church. This is the major reason why the source of religious prophecy itself has shifted to non-parish personnel and to officials high in the church bureaucracies who have no special parish flock to bind together.

The tendency of prophecy to be exemplified more often by non-parish religious leaders has been observed in empirical studies, such as Jeffery Hadden and Raymond Rymph's (1966) study, which found more non-parish than parish clergy active in Chicago demonstrations concerning public school segregation. It is not the purpose of this analysis to fully answer these questions concerning the conditions leading to
religious prophecy and the relationship between prophecy and integration. The objective is to suggest that these same issues relevant to the sociology of religion are also crucial to the study of the prophetic role of American civil religion.

American Civil Religion and Prophecy

Discussion of the prophetic role of American civil religion can be found in preceding sections of this analysis which contrast the integrative, legitimating, folk religion model to the transcendent universal model of American civil religion (see part I, chapter III, pages 30-39; and part II, chapters IV and V). Church historian Sidney Mead was one of the first to elaborate on the prophetic potential of American civil religion. In "The Nation with the Soul of a Church" (1967), Mead argues that due to the religiously pluralistic origins of the United States, Americans began looking to the society itself to perform the religious functions ordinarily performed by the established church. Within a pluralistic system, with no established church, the nation began to fulfill the traditional religious functions of providing cohesion, personal meaning, and prophecy for historical roles. Differentiation between religious and political communities and religious pluralism are the key processes which Mead credits with producing a highly generalized American civil religion, partially separate from the denominations, but standing over them to guard against self-transcendent and particularistic tendencies.
Robert Bellah

The sociological model of Robert Bellah has also stressed the prophetic function of American civil religion. Bellah (1974b:225) believes that American civil religion is founded on the belief that "the nation is not an ultimate end in itself but stands under transcendent judgement."

American civil religion originated with the belief in a power higher than man and the society, and that belief has been periodically renewed at critical moments in American history. For example, the "Declaration of Independence speaks of the 'Laws of Nature and of Nature's God' that are clearly transcendent to and stand in judgement of the laws of the state" (Bellah, 1976b:167). Bellah interprets the Declaration of Independence as giving clear priority to the individual's relationship with God over his relationship to the state, as exemplified by the upholding of the right of citizens to form a new government if the state should become destructive of individual rights. Bellah additionally affirms that "it is of the essence of the American civil religion that it 'challenges institutional authority'" (Bellah, 1976b:167). He cites Lincoln's opposition to the Spanish American War (Bellah, 1974a:39) and Lincoln's 1857 speech decrying the Dred Scott decision (Bellah, 1976b:168) as examples of the institutionally critical potential of American civil religion.

Critical response to the prophetic function of American civil religion proposed by Bellah and Mead has come from folk religionists such as Marty and Herberg, privatists such as
Fenn, and an empirical study by Thomas and Flippen. The folk religionists portray American civil religion as an integrative, culturally legitimating religious symbol system which is too generalized to have prophetic potential. Agreeing with Demerath and Hammond (1967), the folk religionists believe that emphasis on the function of religious integration precludes the exercise of prophecy. The privatist position assumes that if religious symbol systems in general, and American civil religion in particular, perform no functions on the societal level, the prophetic role is also lost. And among the few empirical studies designed to test the transcendent universal model of American civil religion, the earliest study finds no support for the existence of a transcendent dimension of American civil religion.

Martin Marty

In The New Shape of American Religion (1959) religious historian Marty portrays American civil religion as a religion in general lacking the moral and theological substance of denominational religion. American civil religion, in order to be acceptable to Americans of divergent religious backgrounds, is necessarily overgeneralized to the point of losing moral content and prophetic vigor. Americans might still believe in God, but the God of American civil religion has become "an American jolly good fellow" (Marty, 1958:39) unlikely to be the source of prophetic judgement. In a more recent adaptation of his work, Marty (1974:144) observes that
American civil religion can be either "priestly" or "prophetic." (Marty's typology of priestly and prophetic forms of American civil religion is summarized in part I, chapter II, pages 36-38.) Thus Marty's most recent view of American civil religion includes the possibility of a dynamic tension between priestly and prophetic modes of civil religious expression.

Will Herberg

Sociologist Will Herberg (1960) also portrays American civil religion as a generalized folk religion which functions to provide a religiously plural society with an overarching basis of unity. Herberg concludes that the prophetic dimension found in biblical religion is absent from American civil religion, which serves instead the primary functions of legitimating American culture and integrating American society. Andrew Greeley (1972:167), in an evaluation of Herberg's model, acknowledges that the prophetic function is lacking in American civil religion in its popular folk religion form. However, Greeley believes there is another, "elite" form of American civil religion based on the American values of dissent, which has at times produced prophetic action. Bellah himself is aware that the transcendent dimension of American civil religion is not always operative in American society. At times the symbols of American civil religion are coopted into support of a pattern-maintaining folk religion, or twisted into religious nationalism. However, to Bellah
(1976b:167) these manifestations are public theologies, not American civil religion in its ideal, normative form. The variables which Bellah (1975:xii) specifies as intervening in American society to foster the rise of public theologies include the rise of science, the market economy, and industrial capitalism, all of which facilitate self-transcendent interpretations of American civil religion.

Richard Fenn

The privatist position on American civil religion, exemplified by Fenn, assumes that the symbols of American civil religion have no overall cultural significance, and therefore cannot direct prophetic guidance for social change. In particular, Fenn argues that, when the symbols associated with American civil religion are used to legitimate existing institutions, their prophetic potential is nullified. Fenn (1976) selects the American mythic theme of building a new Israel as an illustration. Historically, the symbol of Israel was used paradoxically both to strengthen denominational authority when Christians were in the minority, and to facilitate religious pluralism in nations like the United States.

The "new Israel" theme attempted to assimilate the symbols of personal religious identity to the symbols of ecclesiastical authority, while the heretics asserted secret sources of personal identity and more generalized and abstract symbols of divinity than the God of the Old Testament. . . . The theme of the American Israel has attempted to achieve a similar symbolic interpretation between the symbols of personal identity and national authority; and I further argue that the synthesis, never
complete even on the cultural level, is increasingly pulled apart by the development of separate corporate and individual systems of ideas, rules and values. It is a development which intensifies the antinomian tendencies of popular religious culture (Penn, 1976:161).

Bellah's response to Penn is a reiteration of the distinction between public theology and transcendent American civil religion. In 1776, the symbolism of an American Israel was a part of public theology, not of transcendent universal American civil religion. If the new Israel symbolism was used to reinforce institutional authority, it was only serving the traditional legitimating function of public theology. American civil religion serves a legitimating function, but as Bellah notes, this legitimation is always conditional. Bellah (1976b:167) recalls Weber's perspective on religious legitimation, which holds that "legitimation always involves an element of contingency, a linking of two spheres, the political order and ultimate reality, that are not in principle fused." American civil religion conditionally legitimates American culture, but because American civil religion is not fused with the culture, it is free to offer prophetic judgement when the nation violates its own transcendent ideals.

Empirical Studies

There has been little direct empirical study of the prophetic function of American civil religion, but a few studies of the transcendent dimension of American civil religion provide relevant data. Thomas and Flippen's (1972)
content analysis of the editorials of a national sample of newspapers published during the Honor America weekend, July 4, 1970, was designed as a test of Bellah's thesis of transcendent American civil religion. The coding instrument, intended to distinguish between civil religion items and their nontranscendent equivalents, relied on the mention of God as the main criterion of transcendent civil religiosity. Analysis of data revealed that a fairly large number of non-transcendent civil themes were expressed in the Honor America editorials, but few of the themes specifically referred to a transcendent deity. Evaluation of the measurement instrument used by Thomas and Flippen suggests an alternative interpretation of their findings. Thomas and Flippen required that reference to a transcendent being be explicit, while implied transcendence (illustrated in the statement "America has been blessed") was coded as non-transcendent (Thomas and Flippen, 1972:221). Unfortunately, it is difficult to measure items which reflect cultural values so generally associated with transcendent origins that explicit mention of these origins may be considered unnecessary. Another content analysis, conducted by Jolicoeur and Knowles (1978), using a different measurement instrument than that used by Thomas and Flippen, reported evidence of transcendent civil religious values among Masonic fraternal orders. Two individual belief studies conducted by Ronald Wimberly (Wimberly et al., 1976; Wimberly, 1976) found evidence of a transcendent civil religious dimension of personal belief which is distinct from
individual political and religious belief systems. The data concerning the transcendent dimension of American civil religion are thus inconclusive. It is even more difficult to generalize these inconclusive results to the issue of the prophetic function of American civil religion. The acknowledgement of a transcendent authority is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for prophecy. The results of both Jolicoeur and Knowles, who found a high proportion of transcendent civil religion statements in a national journal published by a traditional fraternal order, and Wimberly, who found a positive association between transcendent civil religious beliefs and political conservatism could be interpreted as support for the Demerath and Hammond (1967) hypothesis of an inverse relationship between religious integration and prophecy. On the surface it seems unlikely that conservative segments of the American public, such as Masons and political conservatives, would be among the prophetic vanguard of the society, despite their adherence to the values of American civil religion. However, conservative organizations have been vocal in reactionary forms of prophecy, exemplified by the John Birch Society's advocacy of the return to the "original principles of the American founders." Additional empirical study is required before sociologists can confirm or disconfirm Bellah's hypothesis of American civil religion's prophetic role.
Sites and Mueller

The most direct empirical test of the prophetic dimension of American civil religion is found in Sites and Mueller's (1978) analysis of sermons delivered on the occasion of the American Bicentennial, July 4, 1976. The majority of sermons given in a simple random sample consisting of sixty Protestant and Catholic churches contained both priestly and prophetic civil religious themes. Prophetic themes were those components of the sermons which cited threats to the American heritage and social problems which could be solved only with God's help. Government scandal and corruption were the most frequently cited threats to America, followed by poverty, racism, prejudice, big business and the concentration of wealth, and military involvement and the misuse of power. The majority of prophetic themes found in the sermons coincided with the issues which Bellah (1975) mentioned as examples of the "broken covenant" between the American nation and its transcendent authority. Sites and Mueller reported some denominational variation with respect to prophetic Bicentennial themes. For example, one-half of the Catholic clergy and one-third of the Episcopal clergy failed to mention any prophetic issues. It is possible that a denomination's tendency to take a prophetic civil religious stance is linked to the denomination's historical inclination toward either a priestly or a prophetic orientation. Nevertheless, some clergy in every denomination sampled mentioned
prophetic themes. Sites and Mueller concluded that the prophetic force in American civil religion is alive and can be evidenced in the sermons of contemporary American clergy.

**Conclusion**

There has been considerable theoretical argument, accompanied by scant empirical research, concerning the functions of American civil religion in contemporary American society. The extremes in the debate are represented by Bellah's model, which argues that American civil religion performs the specialized religious functions of integration, legitimation, and prophecy for American society, and Penn's privatist position, which maintains that American civil religion is incapable of performing any societal function in contemporary times. There is, however, one common point of agreement among the participants in the debate. All agree that traditional religious symbol systems have become so differentiated and privatized in American society as to be weakened in their contributions to American integration, legitimation, and prophetic judgement. Fenn assumes that American civil religion has also been similarly weakened, or privatized, but does not specify what institutional forms do perform the functions necessary for societal self-maintenance. As Stauffer (1973) suggests, even a technological, rational society requires some underlying cultural interpretation of the form by which means are accomplished and requires some agreement on this interpretation to remain even minimally integrated.
American civil religion is a potential contributor to such legitimation and integration for contemporary society. It remains for empirical studies to test this logical, although still unconfirmed, hypothesis. A test of the prophetic function of American civil religion is more problematic. Stauffer (1973:424) sees American civil religion as an institutional alternative which is potentially able to assume the integrative and legitimating functions traditionally performed by religion in society. However, Stauffer is skeptical of the prophetic function which Bellah attributes to American civil religion. There has not yet been sufficient empirical study of the prophetic dimension of American civil religion to substantially support either Stauffer's or Bellah's position. Future research into the prophetic function would best view prophecy as Weber did, as one dimension of a continuum composed of priestly and prophetic styles. Elaboration of the conditions under which a religion is more likely to manifest institutional reinforcement or challenge would be helpful in determining if American civil religion has primarily reflected priestly or prophetic orientations. While it has not yet been demonstrated that American civil religion performs specialized religious functions performed neither by religious nor political organizations, this hypothesis is promising. Even those in opposition to the hypothesis agree that in a society characterized by religious and political differentiation neither religious nor political organizations exclusively
perform the functions of integration, legitimation, and prophetic guidance. The institutional field is thus opened for other symbol systems, such as civil religion, to perform a contemporary version of the traditional functions of religion.
CHAPTER X

AMERICAN CIVIL RELIGION AND
OTHER INSTITUTIONS

In a bibliographic essay on American civil religion, Phillip Hammond (1976:171) poses the question, "What institutions promulgate, transmit, maintain and modify American civil religion?" The two preceding chapters have presented arguments and evidence which suggest that the values of American civil religion are congruent with the values of American religious and political institutions while being structurally and functionally differentiated from these institutions. Contemporary American civil religion appears to be controlled neither by the religious denominations nor the political system, although civil religious values are manifest in both institutions at a high level of generality. The relationship between American civil religion and other American institutions may be expected to follow a similar pattern. Three institutions to which scholars of American civil religion have addressed themselves are: public educational institutions, religio-civic voluntary associations, and economic institutions.
In Piety in the Public School (1970), Robert Michaelson presents a historical analysis of the relationship among the American public schools, American denominations, and American civil religion. According to Michaelson, there was an early, close relationship between American religious and educational institutions. The values of evangelical religion were formative factors in the rise of formal education in colonial America. Institutions of higher education, such as Harvard and Princeton, were founded to serve the primary function of Protestant ministerial education. The establishment of the common school was itself a major cause of educated clergy, many of whom dedicated themselves to developing a nationwide system of general education. On his visit to the United States in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville observed that American education was largely "entrusted to the clergy" (quoted in Michaelson, 1970:51). Although Tocqueville's statement is an exaggeration, early American educational systems, including the public schools, were influenced by traditional religious values and were expected to produce pious and moral citizens. American schools have also traditionally served the civil religious function of social integration. Michaelson (1970:57) states that "the school's role might be called religious not only in the goal of achieving moral character, but also in the development of a sense of community, of a common identity as Americans." In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a series of legal decisions
both precipitated and reflected an increasing differentiation between public education and American religious organizations. Today, public education no longer manifests particularistic religious teachings, and public schools are neither expected nor allowed to perform the function of religious education. Although the special religious functions of the public schools have declined due to differentiation of educational and religious institutions, public schools continue to perform a civil religious function for American society. By use of historical data, this process of differentiation and its effects on the religious and civil religious functions of public education can be documented.

Religious and Civil Religious Functions of Early American Public Education

Bernard Bailyn (1960:21) has observed that, during the early colonial period, the major institutions of socialization and acculturation were the family, community, and church, rather than the school. It was not until the end of the colonial period that formal schooling became more universal, and thus a significant source of socialization. The force of the Great Awakening stimulated the founding of a number of colonial colleges, whose graduates in turn established institutions and standards for all levels of education. The awakeners attempted to build an educational system which fostered religious piety as well as knowledge. Jonathan Edwards, who served briefly as president of Princeton, wrote in Thoughts
on the Revival that citizens should be educated "in common learning" and in "vital piety" (quoted in Michaelson, 1970:49). The early history of Princeton itself illustrates the fusion of religion, patriotism, and education which characterized early American education.

The Reverend John Witherspoon, president of Princeton from 1767 until his death in 1794, eagerly combined piety and patriotism in his life and work. . . . He had not been in New Jersey a decade when he became one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Witherspoon early caught the vision of the new man and the new society that were aborning in the new world. His college, which had been founded to produce zealous converts to Christianity, could as easily also produce zealous citizens of the new republic (Michaelson, 1970:50).

Michaelson credits evangelical religion as the major influence on early American formal education but notes that evangelically influenced schools were often directed toward patriotism as well as toward religion. "The habit of looking to the schools to produce learned piety and patriotism became so deeply ingrained in the American mind that few questioned its validity" (Michaelson, 1970:51). The expectations of higher education were extended to all educational levels, to the extent that American schools typically performed religious and civic functions along with general educational functions. The religious and civil religious functions of the school were not always in harmony, and conflict between religious particularists and generalists was typical. Particularists were motivated to institutionalize denominational and/or sectarian religious values even in the public schools, while generalists advocated nondenominational, nonsectarian approaches to
morality in public education. Archbishop Hughes of New York exemplified the particularist viewpoint. Hughes conceived of religion in denominational terms, and worked for the establishment of a denominationally-influenced public educational system. Horace Mann and John Dewey represented the generalist viewpoint. Both Mann and Dewey were influenced by the deistic, Jeffersonian philosophy of education which stressed the morality of natural, nondenominational religion. Mann opposed sectarianism and, along with Dewey, advocated that the public schools be based on a "common faith" in humanistic, democratic values. In the early conflict between particularists and generalists, both sides prevailed in certain respects. Particularism influenced public education into the twentieth century. Until the United States Supreme Court decisions of the twentieth century weakened religion's influence on the public schools, authorized prayer and Bible reading were commonplace features of the American public school system. Although advocates of these practices viewed them as nonsectarian, they were largely Protestant in orientation, usually based on the King James version of the Bible and utilizing the Protestant version of the Lord's Prayer. As particularism slowly receded, however, the civil religious function of public education emerged more clearly. Particularly during the late 1800s and early 1900s, when America experienced its heaviest waves of European immigrants, the public school was seen as the major institution for the Americanization and democratization of new citizens. Civics,
citizenship, and patriotism courses infused the public schools, and the schools began to play "a role comparable to that of the initiatory rites of a primitive tribe" (Michaelson, 1970:149-150). The public schools' role in fulfilling the civil religious function of social integration is summarized in Michaelson's (1970:156) statement that "... the common school brings common experience which precipitates a common faith which is essential to common welfare."

There is historical evidence that the American public educational system performed both religious and civil religious functions from colonial times into the twentieth century. Often these functions were in competition or conflict. As the twentieth century progressed, the sectarian influence in public schools would gradually decline, leaving civil religion as the only institutionalized form of religious expression remaining in American public education.

Differentiation of Public Education from Religion

The differentiation of American public education from religion is most clearly evidenced by twentieth-century judicial decisions limiting the role of religion in the public schools. Over the past sixty years, the United States Supreme Court has ruled on a number of relevant cases. Michaelson (1970:194) presents a summary table of significant court cases (replicated as figure 7 on the following page).

The first significant Supreme Court rulings of the twentieth century concerned the relationship between public
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHORT DESIGNATION</th>
<th>NAME OF CASE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>CENTRAL ISSUE</th>
<th>DISPOSITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pierce</td>
<td>Pierce v. Society of Sisters</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Oregon's mandatory public school attendance statute.</td>
<td>Unconstitutional (unanimous)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cochran</td>
<td>Cochran v. Louisiana</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Statute providing use of tax money for books for children attending public and other schools.</td>
<td>Upheld (unanimous)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everson</td>
<td>Everson v. Board of Education</td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Tax subsidy for bus transportation for children attending Catholic schools (N.J.)</td>
<td>Upheld (5-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Board of Education v. Allen</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>N.Y. statute requiring tax-subsidized textbooks for parochial and private school students.</td>
<td>Upheld (6-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gobitis</td>
<td>Minersville v. Gobitis</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Required daily flag salute in public school (Minersville, Pa.).</td>
<td>Upheld (8-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnette</td>
<td>West Virginia v. Barnette</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>State Board of Education ruling requiring flag salute in public schools.</td>
<td>Unconstitutional (6-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCollum</td>
<td>McCollum v. Board of Education</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Released-time program on school premises (Champaign, Ill.).</td>
<td>Unconstitutional (8-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zorach</td>
<td>Zorach v. Clauson</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Released-time program off school premises (N.Y.C.).</td>
<td>Upheld (6-3)</td>
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Fig. 7. Significant Court Cases Related to Religion and the Public School

(Michaelson, 1970:194)

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<tr>
<th>SHORT DESIGNATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Engel</td>
<td>Engel v. Vitale</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>New York State Board of Regents composed and school-sponsored prayer.</td>
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<td>370 U.S. 421</td>
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<td>Schempp</td>
<td>School District v. Schempp</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>School-sponsored prayer (Lord's Prayer) and devotional Bible reading (Pa. and Baltimore).</td>
<td>Unconstitutional (8-1)</td>
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<td>Murray v. Curlett</td>
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Fig. 7. Significant Court Cases Related to Religion and the Public School  
(Michaelson, 1970:194)  
(Continued)
schools and private, parochial schools. In 1925, in Pierce, the United States Supreme Court unanimously ruled against Oregon's mandatory public school attendance statute, thus supporting the right of children to attend private and religious schools. In the Cochran, Everson, and Allen decisions, the Court ruled that tax-supported services such as school books and bus transportation provided to public school children must be extended to children attending private and religious schools (Michaelson, 1970:193). Although the decision to extend services paid for by the public to students of religious schools might appear to result in the mixing of public and religious domains, these decisions actually aided the survival of a separate system of religious education. By upholding the right to private and religious education, the Court helped insure that religious alternatives to public education would continue to be available.

The dominant direction of United States Supreme Court opinion on religion and public education began to be expressed in the 1940s. In 1940, in Cantwell v. Connecticut, the provisions of the First Amendment on religion were extended to the states through the Fourteenth Amendment. Explaining the implications of this decision, Justice Black subsequently wrote:

The "establishment of religion" clause of the First Amendment means at least this: Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another (quoted in Michaelson, 1970:195).
Later the Court applied the logic of Cantwell to the McCollum decision, striking down a released-time education program on public school grounds in Champaign, Illinois. The program offered religious instruction during school time on school premises. Although the released-time program was voluntary, the plaintiff claimed that her son had been harassed for non-participation (Michaelson, 1970:196-197). The McCollum decision represented a strict separationist position which was characterized by Justice Black as "a wall of separation between Church and State" (quoted in Michaelson, 1970:197). In 1952 separation became accommodation as the Court upheld a released-time religious education program held off school premises (Zorach). Although the Zorach decision was interpreted by some legal scholars as a softening of the separationist stance of McCollum (Michaelson, 1970:198), the decision was still congruent with the concept of differentiation between religious and public education. The Supreme Court at no time acted in such a way as to destroy the alternative of a separate system of religious education, as long as it was clearly separate, physically and temporally, from public education. The Engel and Schempp decisions of the 1960s reaffirmed the "wall" between public and religious institutions when public school-sponsored prayer and devotional Bible reading were ruled unconstitutional. Two essential factors in this decision were the "identification of the prayer as religious" and the decision that its use constituted "an establishment of religion" (Michaelson, 1970:
The Court rulings of the 1960s illustrate the trend toward differentiation. The extent of this differentiation and the few areas remaining undifferentiated are summarized by Michaelson (1970:206).

On-premises released-time religious education, ceremonial Bible readings, and school-sponsored group prayer are excluded under McCollum, Engel, and Schempp. But at least three things are left to the school following these decisions: (1) accommodations of the type permitted in Zorach; (2) ceremonies of a civic, patriotic, or secular nature in which religious terminology and allusions appear; and (3) the "objective study of" or "teaching about" religion. Number one has the force of law; two and three are suggestive dicta.

The immediate impact of the Supreme Court's separationist decisions on the American denominations was varied. Roman Catholics generally opposed the decisions, Jewish and liberal Protestant groups generally supported them, and other Protestant reaction was mixed. A fear of rising secularization was typical in the groups in opposition. Michaelson (1970:232) notes, however, that as time went on many opponents of the separationist decisions changed their attitudes.

In 1963, the National Council of Churches supported the Engel decision as offering opportunity to reexamine the issue of religious values and public education. The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., which in the 1950s had issued a pamphlet identifying "our schools" as "a bulwark for our Protestant concept of morality, democracy and freedom," passed a statement in 1963 supporting Engel (quoted in Michaelson, 1970:233). In 1964, The Lutheran Church in America declared that its members should not be alarmed over Engel
and Schempp. American Catholics were much slower to accept separationism, but the positive ecumenical statements on education by Vatican II led to a certain relaxation of Catholic opposition (Michaelson, 1970:234). Michaelson (1970:235) concludes that the separationist decisions of the United States Supreme Court and the differentiation of public education from religion, which resulted from the decisions, ultimately had a dual effect on American religious groups. Initially, the separationist doctrine polarized religious opinion and organizations, but the separationist decisions ultimately facilitated interreligious dialogue.

Public Education and American Civil Religion

The United States Supreme Court's separationist decisions promoted the institutional differentiation of American public education from religion. The religious content of public education was limited to the "objective study" of religion or to "ceremonies of a civic, patriotic or secular nature" in which religious terms were used (Michaelson, 1970:226). Civic expression remained the only avenue of religious expression officially tolerated in the American public school. In the Engel decision, Justice Black pointed out that, although schools cannot sponsor religious exercises, they are free to sponsor patriotic exercises. The fact that American patriotism traditionally possesses a religious dimension complicates the issue of separating religion from public instructional content. Supreme Court decisions on the issue
of civil religious expression in public schools have generally maintained that religion can be tolerated in schools if it is contained in a patriotic, rather than a religious, ceremony (Michaelson, 1970:208-209). American public school students may recite the Declaration of Independence and sing the "Star Spangled Banner," both of which contain reference to God. Although the Court did not label such rites as civil religious, they contain an acceptable reference to the religious dimension of the polity. The Court sidestepped the issue of the civil religiosity of the pledge of allegiance to the American flag. In *West Virginia v. Barnette* (1943), the Court ruled that the state could not require students to publicly profess a "patriotic creed," but the grounds for the decision concerned freedom of speech rather than freedom of religion sections of the First Amendment (Michaelson, 1970:210-211). In the arena of public school education, the Court has not ruled, other than in *Barnette*, on the restriction of civil religious expression in schools. Civil religious ceremony is one of the few remaining institutional outlets for religious expression in American public education.

Although the religious content of public education has been severely restricted by the Supreme Court, there has been no effort or intention to limit the moral dimension of public education. In 1951, the Educational Policies Commission of the National Educational Association recommended that public schools emphasize values shared by all Americans and become a major institutional source of socialization of these values.
Ten values which the Commission agreed were common to the American people were:

1. Human personality— the basic value;
2. Moral responsibility;
3. Institutions as the servants of men;
4. Common consent;
5. Devotion to truth;
6. Respect for excellence;
7. Moral equality;
8. Brotherhood;
9. The pursuit of happiness; and

This set of humanistic values, which does not contain reference to a supreme being or to a denominational creed, is representative of American civil religion of either the folk religion or common faith models. Despite the humanistic orientation, the Commission was careful to stress the spiritual nature of these values, perhaps to reassure those who feared complete secularization of the public educational system (Michaelson, 1970:242). The values were also selected to represent ideals which Americans have in common, since the public schools have traditionally tried to perform an integrative function for society. Michaelson notes the high level of public expectations for the public schools to foster American unity.

The American public school came of age in the early decades of the twentieth century, and with this maturity came even greater symbolic potency. Enrollments skyrocketed at a far more rapid pace than population growth. The percentage of the population in school increased dramatically. The public high school emerged as a new and crucially important institution. It continued and capped the work of the elementary school in socializing and Americanizing the youth. The comprehensive high school, offering a wide variety of subjects and experiences to students from every class, every ethnic and religious group, became the most important symbol of the
unifying and democratizing role of the public school. In the American mind the public school became the primary institution of American democracy, the cradle and bulwark of its liberties. It became a prime article of American faith to "believe in" the public school (Michaelson, 1970:137).

In the past, American public schools democratized and integrated the immigrant. In more recent times, the public school has been the primary American institution charged with the moral task of racial integration (Brown v. Board of Education). In contemporary society, as the school continues to assume functions traditionally performed by American families and religious organizations, expectations for schools to serve religious functions are likely to increase, rather than decline. Because the Supreme Court ruled that public schools cannot become an establishment of religion, the religious function of the schools is increasingly expressed in civil religious terms, and focused on civil religious functions. Public schools are expected to socialize students to the civil religious values of equality, brotherhood, and respect for individual personality. These values are general and are intended to overarch the values of particular religious organizations, ethnic and racial groups, and class divisions. Public schools are expected to produce individuals socialized to these values who are able to participate in an integrated common society. This expectation of social integration has not always been realistic. Michaelson (1970:263) observes that the "schools' record in handling pluralism has not been a particularly bright one. Textbooks, for
example, tend to project an image of a rising tide of national oneness of mind, ignoring the ebb of group differences."

Whether or not the schools succeed in fostering generalized, civil religious values which can truly overarch national divisions is, of course, the basic challenge to American civil religion which Bellah (1975) addressed as the "broken covenant."

The American public schools have historically served as a vehicle of the American covenant, and today many Americans continue to look to the schools as an institutional source of societal salvation (Michaelson, 1970:254-255).

**Voluntary Associations**

Warner's (1961) symbolic study of Memorial Day celebrations in an American community suggests that civil religion can be practiced by Americans through voluntary associations such as veteran's organizations and religio-civic community groups. Research by Pamela Jolicoeur and Louis Knowles (1978) finds that fraternal orders still provide an avenue of civil religious expression for many Americans today. Jolicoeur and Knowles note that fraternal orders are likely institutional carriers of American civil religion because orders have traditionally performed both religious and civic functions. Fraternal orders are not "churches" or denominations as such, but they engage in ritual celebrations based on shared myths and affirm a religiously-based morality. Several studies have noted the religious and moral dimensions of fraternal associations (Gist, 1940; Mackenzie, 1967;
Schmidt and Babchuk, 1972). Fraternal orders are also major advocates of patriotism and civic virtue. Orders are therefore among the associations most likely to promulgate the symbols of American civil religion (Jolicoeur and Knowles, 1978:4).

The fraternal order selected for study by Jolicoeur and Knowles was the Freemasons, an order founded in England in the eighteenth century and which has served as a model for other American fraternal associations. The estimated national membership of the Freemasons is four million adult males, encompassing ten million persons totally through affiliated organizations for families of members. Data concerning Freemasonry were collected from issues of The New Age, a national Masonic journal, from 1964 to 1974. The New Age was selected for content analysis because it has the largest national circulation among Masonic journals and because it is the official journal of the Southern Jurisdiction of Scottish Rite Freemasonry, representing Masons in thirty-five states. Analysis of data revealed that 60 percent of the 482 articles sampled were concerned with general topics, and 40 percent with topics specifically related to Masonry. Among the articles devoted to general topics, 31 percent concerned American institutions and the American way of life, and 27.2 percent concerned religion or civil religion specifically. The remainder of the articles dealt with historical subjects such as the founding of the nation. God was mentioned in 46.5 percent of all articles in the sample, the Constitution was
cited in 19.2 percent, and the founding fathers were referred to in 21.6 percent (Jolicoeur and Knowles, 1978:10-11). Jolicoeur and Knowles interpret these findings as confirmation of the hypothesis that Freemasonry is devoted to the maintenance of American civil religion.

The Masonic model of American civil religion differs somewhat from the transcendent universal model of Bellah. Both the Masons and Bellah would be categorized in Marty's typology of kinds of civil religion (see figure 1) as representatives of transcendent civil religion, which envisions a transcendent God who stands in judgement of society. Although both the Masons and Bellah agree on the divinely transcendent nature of American civil religion, they differ on the content of the prophetic message. According to *The New Age*, "the most serious challenges to the American way of life are Communism, creeping Federal control of the nation, and civil disobedience" (Jolicoeur and Knowles, 1978:17). Bellah (1975), in contrast, cites capitalism, racism, and sexism as major threats to the American covenant. Other differences between Bellah and the Masons are revealed by Jolicoeur and Knowles's data. Bellah sees Abraham Lincoln as a major prophet of American civil religion, but *The New Age* articles contained more references to George Washington (12.7 percent of the sampled articles) than to Lincoln (3.6 percent). The Freemasons emphasize the Revolutionary period and see the Constitution and Bill of Rights as symbols of the personal freedoms guaranteed to Americans by the government. *The New
Age gives little attention to Civil War symbolism and its themes of sacrifice and rebirth which signify to Bellah the dissolution and renewal of the American covenant. The civil religion of the Masons is essentially conservative, emphasizing the defense of American institutions, while Bellah's civil religion challenges existing institutional arrangements to renew the spirit of the covenant. Jolicoeur and Knowles (1978:17) summarize their findings on the Masonic model of American civil religion compared to that of Bellah.

To summarize, Scottish Rite Freemasons stress the importance of the revolutionary era as the golden age of the nation. The Constitution and Bill of Rights together with the Declaration of Independence comprise the blueprints for the divinely-inspired society. The national dilemma of slavery and the crisis of the War between the States are largely ignored. The future of the nation depends on its citizens modeling themselves after the example of Washington and other revolutionary leaders in their devotion to God and country. While Masons agree with Bellah that the present time is an era of great crisis for the United States, their prophetic message is a call to return to a former golden age rather than to forge a new society and new structures.

Jolicoeur and Knowles's findings are congruent with Wimberly's (1976) data which showed a positive association between American civil religious beliefs and political conservatism. Jolicoeur and Knowles believe, however, that although the Masons hold a particular interpretation of civil religion, considerable diversity of views exists among other voluntary associations. Jolicoeur and Knowles (1978:18) suggest that Bellah's model of a universal transcendent American civil religion is an ideal type within which there is variation in functional reality. Fraternal orders may function
as conservative, civil religious, denomination-like, class-defending voluntary bastions, while other voluntary associations, such as the human potential groups and organizations like Transcendental Meditation, may potentially function as revolutionary civil religious "cults." Bellah (1974c:41) believes that the latter types of associations are "revolutionary" in the sense that they could foster "fundamental structural change, socially and culturally" based on a "shift away from the exclusive dominance of technical reason," although Bellah admits that these groups "are quite incapable at the moment of supplying the revolutionary alternative."

The empirical findings of Jolicoeur and Knowles and Bellah's ideas suggest that future research on voluntary associations as a vehicle for the practice of American civil religion would be fruitful. Research efforts should focus upon identification of voluntary associations which foster the values of American civil religion, classification of the associations' ideologies along a conservatism-utopianism continuum, and exploration of the relationship between the associations and other institutional carriers of American civil religion.

The Economy

According to Robert Bellah's (1975) analysis of contemporary American society, the values of American civil religion are in conflict with the central values of corporate capitalism. Civil religious and capitalistic values emerged together in the early history of the nation, but have since
become widely divergent. Hiding behind the facade of individualism, corporate development has created a means-oriented economic system uninformed by ultimate concerns. A break in the American covenant is the result.

The History of Utilitarian Individualism

Bellah sees the American nation born under a dual myth. From the biblical tradition, Americans conceived of themselves as "God's chosen people" directed to build a "new Israel" in the new world. The self-transcendent possibilities implied in the concept of a chosen people were tempered by the belief in a transcendent, prophetic God. This relationship between citizen and deity is what Bellah calls the "American covenant." A second powerful American myth has been utilitarian individualism. Utilitarian individualism originated in ancient Greek philosophy and has been carried to the modern era by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and later by the social Darwinists of the late nineteenth century. Utilitarian individualism has run parallel to biblically-based American myths, both historically interacting in complex "relations of attraction and repulsion" (Bellah, 1974:34). Bellah elaborates first on the points of conflict between the biblical tradition of American civil religion and utilitarian individualism.

Whereas the central term for understanding individual motivation in the biblical tradition was "conscience," the central term in the utilitarian tradition was "interest." The biblical understanding of national life was based on the notion of community with charity for all members, a community supported by public and private
virtue. The utilitarian tradition believed in a neutral state in which individuals would be allowed to pursue the maximization of self-interest and the product would be public and private prosperity (Bellah, 1974:34).

There are also points of conjunction between American civil religion and utilitarian individualism. Both myths stress individualism, freedom, and morality, although for different purposes.

The biblical tradition promised earthly rewards, as well as heavenly, for virtuous actions. The utilitarian tradition required self-restraint and "morality" if not as ends then as means. . . . The central value for utilitarian individualism was freedom, a term that could obscure the gap between the utilitarian and biblical traditions, since it is a central biblical term as well. But for biblical religion, freedom meant above all freedom from sin, freedom to do the right, and was almost equivalent to virtue. For utilitarianism it meant the freedom to pursue one's own ends (Bellah, 1974:34-35).

Ultimately biblical tradition was coopted by the utilitarians to the extent that religious and civil religious values were used to legitimate the achievement of self-interest. The American rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were celebrated by utilitarian individualists as the right to pursue wealth and profit through the private enterprise system (Bellah, 1975:121).

Corporate Capitalism

Although the pure instrumentality of industrial capitalism was originally hidden behind the facade of civil religious values, the relationship between American civil religion and modern capitalism has become increasingly tenuous. Bellah (1975:130-131) believes that "the system of corporate industry that has grown up in the last century undermines essential
American values and constitutional order." Far from insuring individual rights and freedoms, corporate growth has diminished the power of the individual citizen. As examples, Bellah notes the decline of the small private business and the near disappearance of the autonomous family farm. Today the average American is a wage-earner in corporate industry or agribusiness. Along with the loss of economic autonomy, Bellah believes that individual citizens have lost political power to corporate hands. Today, political decision making is based on utilitarian considerations of corporate profit, at the expense of personal piety or public virtue. Bellah observes that the supposed benefits of the American economy, "prosperity, abundance, and wealth" are still not available to certain segments of the population and are ultimately unsatisfying even to many who achieve them (Bellah, 1975:135).

Analyzing the social protest movements of the 1960s and early 1970s, which were notable for their inclusion of middle-class, educated American youth, Bellah concludes that the protest movements were symptomatic of a national religious crisis.

That education and affluence did not bring happiness or fulfillment was perhaps as important as the fact that society did not seem to be able to solve the problem of racism and poverty. . . . The deepest cause . . . was, in my opinion, the inability of utilitarian individualism to provide a meaningful pattern of personal and social existence . . . (Bellah, 1974c:36).

Bellah cites the civil rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as an example of religiously based response to the failures of utilitarian individualism. Bellah (1974c) also hopes that some of the anti-utilitarian religious
movements of the 1970s will provide visions which could serve as inspiration to renew the American covenant. In the economic sphere, Bellah (1975:136) advocates a form of "decentralized democratic socialism" which, unlike the anti-individualistic socialism of the U.S.S.R., China, and Cuba, would strike a balance between individual and societal needs. Bellah is not naively optimistic about either religious renewal or economic change in the United States. A critical test of the viability of contemporary American civil religion is its very difficult task of informing an economic system with a structure of ultimate meaning.

Bellah's critic, Richard Penn, essentially agrees with Bellah that the contemporary American economy operates outside the context of ultimacy. Penn believes that modern economies become functional alternatives to religion and contain the sources of their own legitimacy.

Finally, legitimacy in these most advanced societies depends on the capacity to meet most popular demands for participation in the polity and for high levels of consumption rather than on the manipulation of religious symbols. Cultural integration on the level of religious beliefs and values, then, is under these conditions no longer either possible or even necessary for the maintenance of motivation and order (Penn, 1972:17).

Both Bellah and Penn agree that the ideology of American corporate capitalism is incongruent with the values of American civil religion. Disagreement between Bellah and Penn exists only on the level of response to the incongruency and recommendations for the future of the nation. Fenn records and analyzes the differentiation of economic and religious
institutions, a process he sees as smooth and evolutionary. Bellah registers concern that economic institutions are increasingly disharmonious with traditional American values, a process he observes as conflictual and precipitous of both reactionary and revolutionary social movements. Bellah is also not unwilling to respond to what he sees as a crisis of meaning with a prophetic call for the establishment of an economic system congruent with the values of American civil religion. Another and perhaps synthetic position is offered by Robert Stauffer (1973). Stauffer believes that even a utilitarian economy requires some overarching basis of legitimacy. The renewal of American civil religion could provide this legitimacy, or new ideological systems may emerge in the future to provide legitimacy and guidance to the technological economic sector of American society.

Conclusion

There is little sociological research on the relationship between American civil religion and other American institutions. Three relevant studies are summarized in this chapter, but only one (Jolicoeur and Knowles, 1978) was based on sociological research methods. Current knowledge, although quite limited, would support the hypothesis that most American institutions are in the process of differentiating from both traditional religion and civil religion. The institutions likely to be least differentiated from American civil religion are the traditional institutions of socialization and
integration: the family, religious organizations, religio-civic voluntary associations, and educational institutions. These institutions would be expected to manifest civil religious symbols as a high level of generality. Sociological research by Jolicoeur and Knowles (1978) and historical research by Michaelson (1970) support this hypothesis. Institutions performing instrumental functions, such as the economy and communications media, would be expected to exhibit the most differentiation from American civil religion. According to Fenn (1972), Thomas and Flippen (1972), and even Bellah (1975) it is problematic whether civil religious symbols continue to infuse these institutions today. Because available data are so limited, these hypotheses are quite tentative. The field is now open for sociologists to respond to Hammond's (1976:171) important question, "What institutions promulgate, transmit, maintain, and modify American civil religion?"
PART IV

THE EVOLUTION OF CIVIL RELIGION
CHAPTER XI

THEORIES OF RELIGIOUS EVOLUTION

Four major propositions concerning American civil religion, adapted from the work of John A. Coleman (1970) are presented in the Introduction to the present study. Proposition IV locates the development of American civil religion within the context of general cultural evolution. By focusing upon the process of differentiation, stated in Propositions II and III, Coleman concludes that the differentiation of American civil religion from other social institutions parallels basic evolutionary trends. The entire proposition set, with the final proposition added, is reproduced below.

Proposition I

American civil religion is the religious symbol system which relates the citizen's role and American society's place in space, time, and history to the conditions of ultimate existence and meaning.

Proposition II

American civil religion is structurally differentiated from both the political community and the religious community.

Proposition III

American civil religion performs specialized religious functions performed neither by church nor state.
Proposition IV

The differentiation of American civil religion from political and religious communities follows the general direction of cultural evolution.

Proposition IV, which states that the structural and functional differentiation of American civil religion can be predicted by the general direction of cultural evolution, requires further elaboration. In part III, chapter VIII of this volume, the evolutionary theories of Parsons (1971) and Bellah (1964) were discussed as predecessors to Coleman's (1970) theory of civil religious evolution. The evolutionary processes of differentiation, adaptive upgrading, inclusion, and value generalization (Parsons, 1971:126) were shown to be the basis of Bellah's five ideal typical historical stages of religious evolution: primitive, archaic, historic, early modern, and modern religion. Although Bellah does not mention the development of civil religion in his article on religious evolution, the evolutionary trends he observes are logically extended by Coleman to the differentiation of civil religion. Coleman finds religion, civil religion, and political systems generally undifferentiated in primitive and archaic societies. In historic or early modern society, church-state separation develops for the first time, but civil religion does not yet appear in differentiated form. In modern societies, civil religion may continue in an undifferentiated state, sponsored either by church or state. Another modern alternative is the development of secular
nationalism, a functional alternative to civil religion, exemplified by the modern U.S.S.R. The other alternative, the development of a fairly autonomous, differentiated system of civil religion, is to be expected in the most modern, highly differentiated, religiously plural societal type. Coleman believes that this pattern of differentiated civil religion is evident in the contemporary United States.

Coleman's theory of civil religious evolution is a logical outgrowth of the evolutionary models of Parsons and Bellah. In order to compare Coleman's theory and Proposition IV to ideas advanced by other sociologists of religion, several different theories of religious change will be examined. The ideas of Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Joachim Wach, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, Bryan Wilson, Richard Fenn, and David Martin will be explored, with major attention given to each theorist's model of religious evolution and its implications for civil religious evolution. Because each of the selected theories proposes that religious evolution in some way results in secularization, the uses of the term "secularization" will first be addressed.

**The Concept of Secularization in Theories of Religious Evolution**

On the most general level of analysis, each of the selected theories of religious evolution proposes that modernization is associated with secularization. Secularization is a concept which has been used in different ways by different sociologists, resulting in analytic imprecision. Larry Shiner
reviews (1968:208-209) notes that, besides the original meaning of secularization (the transfer of lands from church to civil control), there are six other common uses of the term in contemporary sociological research: (1) decline of religion, (2) conformity with "this world," (3) disengagement of society from religion, (4) transposition of religious beliefs and institutions, (5) desacralization of the world, and (6) movement from a "sacred" to a "secular" society. Secularization as "decline of religion" refers to the loss of prestige and social acceptance associated with traditional religion. Empirical studies, such as Glock and Stark's Religion and Society in Tension (1957), which concluded that religion is losing its influence, exemplify the decline-of-religion type of secularization. Secularization viewed as "conformity with 'this world'" would result in a society preoccupied with ordinary activities of daily life maintenance to the extent that religious boundaries between groups would disappear. Typical of this second meaning of secularization is Will Herberg's (1960) thesis that current, American religious identifications are largely secular in nature and simply reflect acceptable ways of being a good American. Secularization as "disengagement of society from religion" refers to the process by which social institutions separate themselves from religious understanding and control, leaving religion to motivate the private lives of individuals. This is essentially the theory of Peter Berger (1967) and Thomas Luckmann (1967). Shiner criticizes all three definitions of secularization for
ambiguity and dependence upon the definition of religion for derived meaning. For example, it is difficult to show secularization as a decline of religion without specifying some original period of religious domination from which decline could come (Shiner, 1968:210). Shiner (1968:213) suggests that "the more descriptive and neutral" concept of differentiation be substituted for secularization when either "decline of religion" or "disengagement of society from religion" are intended.

The idea of secularization as a "transposition of religious beliefs and institutions" is a fairly precise meaning of secularization, referring to the transformation of sacred phenomena into phenomena controlled by humans. It was through "transposition" that the spirit of capitalism became a secularized version of the Protestant Ethic. "Desacralization of the world" also has a specific meaning based on Weber's process of rationalization and disenchantment. The final definition of secularization, "movement from a 'sacred' to a 'secular' society" is taken from Howard Becker's (1957) analysis. According to Becker, the secular society is the society open to change, not only from religious traditions, but also from any traditional beliefs. Becker's usage of secularization is the broadest of the six meanings, as it is derived from a general theory of social change.

Due to the need for conceptual clarification and precise operational definition, Shiner (1968:207) recommends that social scientists either stop using the term
secularization, or recognize that it is "a comprehensive term covering three complementary processes: desacralization, differentiation, and transposition." Typical of the conceptual imprecision criticized by Shiner is the work of Bryan Wilson, whose conceptualizations of secularization range from disengagement to desacralization to decline of religion. In *Contemporary Transformations of Religion* (Wilson, 1976:16, 20, 11), for example, Wilson characterizes secularization through the observations that "the presidency that the Church once exercised over social life is gone" (disengagement); "modern society simply denies the authority of the Churches by ignoring them" (decline of religion); and "we can observe a gradual, uneven, at times oscillating trend, the general direction of which is none the less unmistakable, in the nature of human consciousness, towards . . . a 'matter-of-fact' orientation to the world" (desacralization). Applying Shiner's criteria for clarification, Wilson can be credited for his treatment of secularization as a complex phenomenon involving several separate but interrelated parts; but he can also be criticized for his failure to distinguish the different processes involved in secularization. A more systematic treatment of secularization is advanced by David Martin in *A General Theory of Secularization* (1978). According to Martin (1978:69), differentiation and "the onset of anomie" are the basic processes related to secularization. These processes are subject to cultural and historical variation, resulting in a variety of basic patterns of secularization. In order
to systematize these variations, Martin specifies a series of cultural frames, events, and categories which characterize the basic patterns of secularization. Basic patterns of secularization may be indicated, for example, by the degree of religious pluralism in a society, the degree of anti-clericism, the degree of cultic participation, and by other variables relating to structural differentiation (Martin, 1978:59). By evaluating societies according to each indicator, a complex pattern of secularization emerges which is far more detailed and specific than Wilson's general use of the term secularization could provide. Martin is the one contemporary theorist who has made the greatest effort to conceptualize secularization as a complex phenomenon affected by numerous variables and observable in a variety of cultural patterns. Due to the fact that Martin is exceptional in his precise treatment of secularization, the following analysis of theories of religious change remains hampered by the conceptual imprecision critiqued by Shiner. In the following analyses of the theories of Durkheim, Weber, Wach, Berger and Luckmann, Wilson, Fenn, and Martin, specific terms such as differentiation and rationalization (desacralization) are substituted whenever possible for the more general "secularization." It is expected that this more precise delineation of the specific processes associated with secularization will lead to a clearer understanding of patterns of religious evolution and the implications of these patterns for civil religious evolution.
Durkheim has proposed a unilinear, evolutionary model for the explanation of the religious changes which are associated with industrial development. The model posits a unilinear movement of societies from the sacred to the profane polarity associated with the process of differentiation. A specific examination of Durkheim's model begins with his primary postulate which asserts that collective representations, the concrete symbols of the social group, constitute collective reality. The original collective representation, the religious symbol, is the basis from which all other representations evolved (Durkheim, 1965:22). Durkheim further posits a transition in the collective representations from sacred to profane, paralleled by a shift from repressive to restitutive law (Durkheim, 1965:53). From these postulated changes in the collective indicators of social reality, a core Durkheimian hypothesis can be deduced: the movement from mechanical to organic solidarity. In terms of social organization, the transition occurs from segmental to organized social types. The segmental type, analogous to the homogeneous rings of an earthworm, is the social organization of the clan. The organized type, the product of the division of labor, is similar to a "system of different organs each of which has a special role, and which are themselves formed of differentiated parts" (Durkheim, 1964:181). The division of labor itself is causally linked with the growth of moral and material density.
Not mere population growth alone, but the increased clustering and interaction of populations are the stimuli which set off a complex chain reaction. Viewed historically, the material and moral density of society induced a division of labor, which produced organized societal types from segmental ones and organic solidarity from mechanical solidarity. These processes of transition are indicated empirically by the concrete changes in legal sanctions from repressive to restitutive forms, and the movement from sacred to profane collective representations. In highly simplified terms, structural differentiation produces movement from a sacred to a secular society.

Unlike modern privatists, Durkheim does not predict that the common conscience would disappear under organic solidarity in modern society. As society becomes more heterogeneous and differentiated, the common conscience would necessarily broaden to include individual differences. Durkheim spent a portion of his intellectual life shifting back and forth on the issue of moral crisis under organic solidarity. On the one hand, he feared the breakdown of the moral community into a state of anomie. On the other, he offered solutions to combat anomie and explanations for the perseverance of morality. One explanation was the evolution of justice in restitutive law. Durkheim presents justice as the highest form of morality in organic society with individualism the last surviving mechanical form. The civil
religion which Durkheim envisioned for France was based on a combination of justice and rational individualism (Bellah, 1973:xl-xli).

Durkheim's model of religious change can be categorized as a unilineal model of progressive evolution from sacred to profane symbols. The sacred and profane stages are posed as polar opposites, with no intermediary stages defined. Although Durkheim clearly associates the sacred to profane transition with the process of differentiation, users of the model have no clear indicators of the state of sacred beliefs at any given point in time, other than through the empirical examination of restitutive law and of the sacred belief systems themselves. Durkheim's model is therefore quite general and suffers from lack of specification of independent, dependent, and intervening variables. Durkheim's assumption of unilinear differentiation might also be questioned by the observers of complex social reality. Nevertheless, Durkheim's model stimulated a series of linear theories of religious evolution--most notably the theories of Wach (1962), Parsons (1971), and Bellah (1964)--which more clearly specify some of the variables suggested by Durkheim, and critically re-address the assumptions of evolutionary thought. Coleman's (1970) theory of civil religious evolution is partially derived from Durkheim's general model of cultural and religious evolution. Proposition IV's assertion that the differentiation of civil religion follows the general pattern of cultural evolution
assumes a Durkheimian view of evolution, minus the assumption of absolute unilinearity.

Max Weber

Weber is well-known for his study of religious change in the modern industrial period (Weber, 1948). Weber's concept for the unilinear process of modernization is rationalization, a process which has important implications for religious systems. Through increasing use of rational bases for human social action, the world gradually loses its sacred character to causal and efficiency-oriented explanations of reality. Rationality refers to the functional rationality in which goal attainment is based on utilitarian principles. The effect of rationalization on religion is secularization or the "desacralization of the world" type (Shiner, 1968:215-216). In the religious sphere, the trend of progressive rationalization is evidenced in the social attitude of "dis-enchantment."

Weber's study of the Protestant Ethic is an effort to gauge the effects of progressive rationalization in the context of modern Protestantism. In particular, Weber was interested in the legitimating function of religion, and how that function might be affected by rationalization. Weber's conclusions on the Protestant Ethic thesis have been controversial and open to varying interpretations and critiques. One commentator, David Little (1970) has made observations which have particular relevance to the relationship between
rationalization and system of legitimation. According to Little's analysis of Weber, rationalization and the rational-legal type of authority assume increasing institutional differentiation and autonomy, in contrast to the institutional dominance of the traditional system. Yet, religion always serves as a legitimating force, even for the process of rationalization.

Wherever the direction of the whole way of life has been methodically rationalized, it has been profoundly determined by the ultimate values toward which this rationalization has been oriented. These values and points of view were thus religiously conditioned (Weber, 1958:286-287).

Little concludes that Weber found Calvinism and Puritanism to be congruent in their support of the capitalist ethos, and thus served as legitimating factors.

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism was written to suggest that some of the characteristics of the spirit of capitalism are contained in the theological symbols and beliefs that could initially solve—or at least give some direction to—the crisis of order which attends the development of modern industrial society (Little, 1970:13).

Although neither Weber nor Little addresses himself to the issue of civil religion, Little's interpretation of Weber's theory of modernization is congruent with Coleman's theory of civil religious evolution. Both theories predict increasing differentiation as the basic evolutionary process. Both theories also state that the crisis of order precipitated by differentiation must be addressed by an ultimate system of reference. For Coleman, this ultimate system of reference is civil religion.
Joachim Wach

Wach's (1944) model of religious change throughout history contains many descriptive examples of the ways in which religious differentiation follows social differentiation. The result is somewhat similar to Bellah's (1964) differentiation theory of religious evolution. Typical of Wach's model is his outline of three types, or stages, of church-state relationship. In the primitive Stage 1, church and state are fused to the point that it is impossible to determine which institution dominates. In Stage 2 (comparable to Bellah's archaic and historic religions) both politics and cults gain strength, leading either to state establishment as a means of control over religion or the beginnings of the process of eventual church-state separation. In Stage 3 (Bellah's historic, early modern, and modern religions) the state reacts to new and competing religions with the same alternatives of Stage 2—establishment or pluralism (Wach, 1944:299-302).

Wach's model does not address the possibilities subsequently raised by Coleman (1970) for the variation of church-state relations in contemporary societies. Depending upon the level of institutional differentiation within a society, Coleman observes either an undifferentiated form of civil religion sponsored by either church or state, secular nationalism, or differentiated civil religion within a religiously plural context.

Wach's linear model of religious change is not sophisticated, but it sets the style of future, more elaborate
models developed by Parsons (1971) and Bellah (1964). Wach's treatment of religious evolution is to be credited for its analysis of secularization in terms of the more specific processes of social and religious differentiation. In Wach's view, it is the differentiation and pluralization of religious structures, not secularization, that is the characteristic and dominant religious process of the modern age. Proposition IV, which states that civil religious systems follow the same differentiating pattern as other religious systems, is a logical extension of Wach's model to the realm of civil religion.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann

The works of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann on religion and modernization will be examined together, based on their collaboration in the development of the dialectical process theory presented in The Social Construction of Reality (1966). The dialectical process theory traces the mechanisms by which social forms are "internalized" through socialization, "externalized" through social action, and "objectified" through reification and institutionalization, only to be internalized by the subsequent generation. Through this ongoing dialectical process social reality (including religious reality) is "created."

Peter Berger (1967) views religion as the human construction of a "sacred cosmos" (1967:25). During the dialectic stage of objectification, religious constructions are
reified and become separated from the individual. When reli-
gious constructions begin to lose their power, due to indus-
trialization, cultural differentiation, or other forces
inherent in religion itself, secularization emerges in a sim-
ilar dialectical process. Berger views secularization as
both a societal and individual process. On the social level,
secularization is the process whereby religions lose their
legitimating influence over segments of society. This con-
ception of secularization is similar to Shiner's (1968:212-
214) secularization as "disengagement of society from religion."
Secularization of consciousness refers to the individual loss
of religious interpretations of the world and of the self.
Through secularization, religion is no longer a source of a
binding worldview and moral community but becomes privatized.
In one sense, secularization (differentiation) has acted as a
disorganizing process, but it has also opened up a world of
many religious and nonreligious modes of potential reorganiza-
tion.

In a later work, The Homeless Mind: Modernization and
Consciousness (with Brigitte Berger and Hansfield Kellner,
1973), Berger specifies in more detail the components of modern
consciousness and the processes of modernization. Modern
(secularized) consciousness is indicated by the characteris-
tics of rationality, componentiality, multi-relationality,
makeability, plurality, and progressivity (1973:111-113).
The processes of modernization include the primary processes
of technological production and bureaucratization
(rationalization), and the secondary processes of urbanization, open systems of stratification, mass education, and mass communication (differentiation) (1973:103). The major transmission process of rationalization and differentiation is cultural diffusion, by which the symbols of modernization are envied and copied (1973:139). In The Homeless Mind, Berger does not expand beyond his earlier conclusions on the implications of modernization for religion. Religious alienation and privatization continue to be the presumed result of modernization. Berger does predict the development of a non-religious ideology, "demodernization consciousness," as the dialectical result of the objectification of modernizations. Although The Homeless Mind brings little new to the study of religious change, Berger's specification of the processes of modernization is important for the future use of the dialectic process model for the study of religious evolution.

Thomas Luckmann (1967) focuses more specifically than Berger upon the reorganization potential of secularization for religion. Luckmann begins his 1967 analysis by noting that the sociology of religion has frequently taken it for granted that the church and religion are identical. This assumption led to the conclusion that, when modernization began to undermine the traditional churches, religion was similarly undermined. Luckmann suggests that the study of the effects of modernization on existing religious institutions actually obscures the fact that new religious meaning systems are being developed (1967:40).
Luckmann describes several alternative modes of adaptation to the erosion of traditional religious meanings. The individual may alternatively make an individualistic "leap of faith" into a personal, religious meaning system; he or she may shift back and forth between traditional and secular definitions of reality; or he or she may develop an explicitly secular value system (1967:86). Church religion is thus one surviving organizational form of religion and is not disorganized in the formal organizational sense of the term. Private but still religious views of reality are also emerging, based (according to Luckmann) on the themes of autonomy, self-expression, self-realization, the mobility ethos, sexuality, and familism (1967:108-114). These themes are more or less identical to those specified by Richard Fenn (1972:17) as the only remaining functions of religion in modern society. Luckmann is also in agreement with Fenn (1970; 1972; 1974) in his conclusion that the new, subjective religious forms are far less cohesive than traditional religious forms, and have a low degree of transcendence. The evolutionary perspective is maintained in Luckmann's prediction that the religious trends he describes are irreversible by-products of modern industrialism.

Neither Berger nor Luckmann specifies stages of religious evolution associated with stages of modernization. Differentiation and its impact on religious construction of reality proceeds in an unspecified evolutionary manner, marked only by the dialectical process stages of objectification,
externalization, and internalization. Neither Berger nor Luckmann deals explicitly with the functions of religion, but both generally predict a decline of the role of traditional religion in fostering social integration and legitimation of meaning. Both predict a weakening of traditional religious structures, the privatization of religion, and the development of multiple sacred and secular ideological choices for the modern individual. Although Berger and Luckmann do not include civil religion as one of the possible religious choices in contemporary society, presumably civil religion could provide an alternative mode of adaptation to the erosion of traditional religion. But the fact that neither theorist considers civil religion for this purpose suggests that privatism does not offer strong support of a theory of civil religious evolution.

Bryan Wilson

Wilson draws both on Durkheim's assumption of unilinear differentiation and on Weber's process of rationalization as bases for a modern theory of secularization which characterizes religion as declining in influence, becoming desacralized, and differentiating from other institutions. With the advent of industrialization and technological development, the "slow process of change in the thinking of men has been steadily to make religious belief and practice . . . difficult for modern man" (Wilson, 1976:12). The result is that "traditional theology, church organization, and sacred
rituals appear to be fundamentally irreconcilable with the values, lifestyles, and functional imperatives of advanced industrial society" (Wilson, 1968:73). Sources of the decline of religion are to be found in the processes of differentiation and rationalization, particularly manifest in "the decline of community," "increased social mobility," and "the impersonality of role relationships" (Wilson, 1976:99). Where these processes are observable, particularly in Western societies, societal responses include ecumenism, voluntary destructuration, incorporation of rationalization, eclecticism, and charismatic renewal (Wilson, 1976:85). These responses to religious erosion are all viewed as manifestations of the overriding process of secularization. Even countersecular forces such as religious renewal are characterized as merely ephemeral substitutes for declining traditional religious organizations.

Although Wilson posits the erosion of religious beliefs and institutions along a line of progressive rationalization, he is aware of cultural and historical variation in religious evolution. The unique feature affecting the American pattern of religious evolution has been the structure of denominational pluralism. Wilson believes that the American pattern of interdenominational competition is itself a manifestation of religious decline. "That competitiveness itself reflects one of the primary secular values of American life." As a result, "American churches function as voluntary associations and voluntaryism itself may account for their institutional
resilience" (Wilson, 1968:77-78). In Wilson's (1968:79) view, religious organizations in America function as "surrogate communities based on the will for togetherness," performing emotional functions for individuals, but failing to provide sources of societal legitimation and regulation.

Wilson's theory of the progressive decline of religion in modern society has implications for the study of American civil religion, although Wilson limits his own analysis to denominational religion. Wilson's assumption of unilinear religious decline and desacralization leads to a privatistic position. Wilson concludes that religious cohesion (and by implication, civil religious cohesion) is lost in the rationalized, differentiated society. "Modern societies have ceased to depend on an integrated consensus of values as the basis of cohesion" (Wilson, 1976:113). New religious movements are dismissed as too transitory and uninstitutionalized to provide new bases of societal integration and legitimacy. The potential of civil religion to perform these functions is not even considered. Application of Wilson's assumptions to American civil religion would lead to the conclusion that American civil religion, like other religious forms, has declined in influence. If American civil religion persists at all, it would be manifest as nationally self-transcendent folk religion.

Wilson's theory is limited by the assumption of unilinear secularization. Once secularization is predicted, all observable religious forms are necessarily viewed as eroding,
inadequate, or transitory. The persistence of religious symbols and the phenomenon of religious renewal are not adequately explained. Wilson's assumptions further lead to the prediction of a societal crisis. Wilson (1976:114-115) warns that "no persisting society can leave people to do their own thing" while observing that "we know no moral order to give meaning to our social order." If these statements are accurate, presumably modern society no longer exists. Yet there is evidence which suggests that modern social orders do persist. Wilson fails to confront this evidence and is drawn into a paradox which remains unsatisfactorily answered. This paradox could be addressed by recognizing civil religion as a potential source of social cohesion and legitimation for modern society.

Richard Penn

Richard Penn's basic assumptions concerning American civil religion appear in chapters VI and IX of the present study. In a recent work, Toward a Theory of Secularization (1978), Fenn locates the evolution of civil religion within the general context of religious evolution by specifying the emergence and subsequent decline of civil religion as one stage of secularization (differentiation). The five steps in Fenn's theory of secularization are:

Step 1  Differentiation of religious roles and institutions.
*Differentiation may be partial, continuing and reversible.
Step 2  Demand for clarification of boundary between religious and secular issues.
*Conflict between religious ethnic groups and the larger society.

Step 3  Development of generalized religious symbols or ideology: the "civil religion."
*Problems of authenticity arise in the political use of religious themes.

Step 4  Minority and idiosyncratic definitions-of-the-situation: secularized political authority.
*The dispersion of the sacred.

Step 5  The separation of individual from corporate life.
*Religious groups differ in their conceptions of the scope of the sacred and in their demands for integration of corporate and personal values systems (Fenn, 1978:xvii).

Fenn predicts that civil religion will emerge as a societal solution to transcend particularistic ethnic and religious identities which might divide society. Civil religion is a socially constructed myth, which is more or less believable depending upon societal, and particularly political, conditions. The power of civil religion is weakened, for example, when "the state itself departs from the standards of civil religion, while continuing to invoke its symbols" thus leaving citizens "caught in a 'double-bind' between dissent and loyalty" (Fenn, 1978:41). When political or economically motivated activity is masked by the symbols of civil religion, the symbols become tarnished and lose their transcendent and unifying potential. In the final stages of secularization, the state loses its sacred character, while "a wider range of personal and social activity comes to acquire sacred significance," until the boundary between secular and
sacred realms corresponds to the boundary between societal and personality systems (Fenn, 1978:54).

Fenn (1978:53) acknowledges that his theory of religious evolution leads toward a "death of society" position. Unlike Wilson, Fenn is willing to confront this issue by questioning the process by which sociologists infer that a morally based social order exists.

I have also become increasingly skeptical as to whether there exists an overarching set of beliefs that most Americans hold to be true of God and man, let alone true for this nation. References to such a cultural whole by social scientists and politicians are forms of mystification, in short, ideology. What is it, after all, of which individual citizens are a part? What is that "society" and where are its boundaries? For what does it stand and what are its essential standards (Fenn, 1978: ix)?

Although Fenn's five steps lead toward the moral dissolution of society, the trend is not portrayed as totally unilinear. There is dynamic tension between the trend toward desacralization of the societal system and the contrary trend of "de-secularization" in other areas of social life. "As political authority becomes secularized various individuals, groups, and institutions turn to religious culture for support in their increased claims to social authority" (Fenn, 1978:55). As the state is demythologized, private religious mythologies become more demanding and competitive. By recognizing the dynamic relationship between secularization and desecularization, Fenn acknowledges that religious change is a complex process manifest through seemingly paradoxical trends and countertrends. Fenn remains closed, however, to the
possibility of desecularization at the societal level leading to the renewal of American civil religion. "To establish the existence of such a cultural whole inevitably requires a leap beyond the data" (Fenn, 1978:51). Although Fenn is only willing to discuss American civil religion in the past tense, the fact that he includes civil religion as a critical phase of religious evolution is a contribution to the study of the relationship between general religious trends and patterns of civil religious evolution.

David Martin

In A General Theory of Secularization (1978) David Martin outlines a series of propositions designed to specify the conditions under which religious institutions lose influence and religious beliefs become desacralized. The resulting theory is more specific and complex than the other theories surveyed here, because more than one basic pattern of secularization is proposed. Differentiation is specified as the major universal process affecting religious change in modern societies. Martin is careful to note that, although universal processes may be expected to occur, they are not invariate and are subject to influence from a number of cultural factors. Cultural "frames" through which differentiation flows include major historical events, such as the Reformation or the American Revolution; the influence of major ideologies, such as Calvinism or enlightenment thought; and the relationship between religion and cultural identity (Martin, 1978:4-9).
These general cultural frames suggest additional categories of variables which Martin isolates as particularly crucial to the formation of basic patterns of secularization. Major categories include: (1) whether the society is Catholic or not; (2) whether the religion is monopolistic or not; and (3) whether the society has developed through internal conflict or conflict against external oppressors (Martin, 1978:17). Variations in these categories result in the basic patterns of secularization observable in different societies. Although Martin (1978:59) considers as many as eight different patterns of secularization, the dominant types are the Anglo-Saxon, American, French, and Russian patterns, described below:

1. Anglo-Saxon
   Institutional erosion, erosion of religious ethos, maintenance of amorphous religious beliefs.

2. American
   Institutional expansion, erosion of religious ethos, maintenance of amorphous religious beliefs.

3. French (or Latin)
   Massive religious beliefs, ethos and institutions confronting massive secularist beliefs, ethos and institutions.

4. Russian
   Massive erosion of religious beliefs, ethos and institutions but maintenance of the beliefs and the ethos within the surviving religious institutions (Martin, 1978:7-8).

Martin suggests a number of additional characteristics by which the basic patterns can be identified and better understood. Basic patterns of secularization can vary according to the degree of anti-clericalism, the status of the clergy,
the degree of cultic participation, the influence of intellectualism in religion, the extent of democratic or communist influence, the existence of religious political parties, and the type of civil religion, among other factors (Martin, 1978: 59).

Martin's complex schema can be illustrated by examination of one of the four major patterns of secularization—the American case. According to Martin, the American pattern of secularization was framed in a pluralistic, Protestant society which was strongly shaped in a revolution against foreign rule. The result is a society where church and state are differentiated, where denominations and sects have proliferated and command large memberships, and where religious organizations play an important role in the sponsorship of charitable and welfare endeavors. The clergy, however, lack social power and are "assimilated to the concept of rival entrepreneurs running varied religious services on a mixed laissez-faire and oligopolistic model," and "religious styles constantly adapt and accept vulgarization in accordance with the stylistic tendencies of their varied markets" (Martin, 1978:28). American religious organizations remain influential on some measurements (membership and professed belief) and show decline on others (social power, maintenance of theological rigor). Unlike Bryan Wilson, Martin does not portray secularization as an absolute trend. Differentiation, as framed by the unique American cultural configuration, has produced a mixture of secular and religious forms. Individual response
to secularization is also complex. Personal responses to the differentiation of American society include: (1) "apathy which retires from explicit institutional religion"; (2) a turn to mysticism as a reaction against fragmentation and meaninglessness; and (3) a search for functional equivalents to religion in the family, community, or commune (Martin, 1978:93). Within American culture a religious cycle of response to differentiation can be detected.

American religion then comes to operate as a feeder system whereby old-fashioned evangelical denominations pull in new recruits and pass them on to liberal bodies (Glock and Stark, 1968). These then lose members to mystical cults which in turn reassemble behind the Protestant Ethic (Martin, 1978:31).

Martin's propositions lead to a theory of religious evolution in America which incorporates both linear and cyclical change. A central feature of the complex pattern of American religious evolution as characterized by Martin is the existence of American civil religion.

Any characterization of the United States must emphasize the fact that it represents a very high degree of differentiation in that church is formally separated from state, and even religion from school, and yet the overall social order is legitimated by a pervasive civil religion (Martin, 1978:28).

Martin views American civil religion as a by-product of the American cultural frame of church-state separation, the synthesis of Protestantism and enlightenment thought, and the Revolutionary experience of internal cohesion against external domination. Like Robert Bellah (1975), Martin locates the historical origins of American civil religion in the fusion of Puritan and Enlightenment principles of the American
founders, which led to the institutionalization of church-state separation. Because no monopoly religion existed, the moral basis of the social order was necessarily derived from general values which could overarch particular religious organizations.

... It is just this explicit separation of church from state that enable a pluralistic religion-in-general to buttress the higher level legitimations of American society. ... Such legitimation must, of course, not only be general, but vague. They must be above specific denominations and specific institutional arrangements, whether these be religious or secular (Martin, 1978:70).

In Parsonian terms, differentiation is accompanied by value generalization (Parsons, 1971). Martin is aware of both the structural strengths and weaknesses of American civil religion. The fact that the values of American civil religion must be highly general to unite a pluralistic society is not necessarily a weakness. "If an ideal is sufficiently broad, it cannot be compromised by poor political performance and corruption, but acts rather as a potent point of moral appeal" (Martin, 1978:70). A typical response to the Watergate scandal, for example, was the isolation of Richard Nixon as an immoral individual rather than the total condemnation of American standards of political morality. Yet, Richard Penn (1978) has warned that the symbols of American civil religion are vulnerable to manipulation for political and economic goals, with loss of public faith a common result. Martin also acknowledges this structural problem, but predicts that, if the vision of American civil religion remains future oriented, the covenant is less likely to be broken.
Of course if an ideal becomes too successful a generation may arise which expects it to be realized in the proximate future. Then alienation must follow, as for example happened in the 1960s. Broad religious legitimations encounter a limit because their promises must either remain in the long-term future or be compromised by contemporary performance (Martin, 1978:70).

Martin's portrayal of American civil religion recalls Bellah's (1975) image of the broken covenant. American civil religion is seen as constituting a generalized system of national legitimation, cohesion, and prophecy, which under specific conditions can fail at one or all of these areas of performance. Variations in the performance of American civil religion are not automatically viewed by Martin as evidence of the death of American society.

Martin's theory of religious evolution begins where many of the other theories cited in this chapter tend to end: with the processes of differentiation and rationalization in modern society. Instead of assuming that these modern trends proceed invariably to a universal decline of religion, Martin seeks sources of cultural variation which significantly shape religious change. Martin provides a theoretical framework by which variations in religious evolution may be studied empirically. Martin's approach differs from that of unilinear theorists such as Bryan Wilson, who tend to interpret all behavior as manifestations of secularization once secularization has been assumed.

Martin's theory, however, has its own limitations. Some of his variables overlap with one another; he is unclear about the number of basic patterns of secularization to be
specified; and he fails to distinguish independent from dependent variables clearly. Despite these limitations, Martin has developed a general theory of religious change which can account for a variety of cross-cultural religious patterns, as well as the specific patterns of religious evolution within a single society. When Martin's theory is applied to the United States, a number of religious and "secular" phenomena are revealed, including the presence of American civil religion. American civil religion is portrayed as the religious symbol system of the nation subject to the same evolutionary influences and shaped by the same cultural frame as other American religious forms. By viewing civil religion as one variable in the context of religious change, Martin contributes perspective both to the study of religious evolution and to the study of American civil religion.

**Evaluation of the Theories of Religious Evolution**

Among the theories of religious change which have been considered in this chapter and also in chapter V, religious evolution has been variously conceived of as occurring unilinearly between two discrete poles (Durkheim), along the progressive line of rationalization (Weber and Wilson), along a continuum of cultural and religious differentiation (Parsons, Wach, Fenn, Bellah, and Coleman), in a dialectical process of social reality construction (Berger and Luckmann), and as a complex combination of linear and cyclical processes within cultural frames (Martin). S. N. Eisenstadt (1964:375)
notes that two critical stumbling blocks for evolutionary models have been: (1) the assumption of linearity, and (2) failure to fully specify the systemic characteristics of major developmental stages. The models of Durkheim, Weber, Wach, Parsons, and Wilson are all limited, in differing degrees, by the stumbling block of assumed linearity. Among the linear theorists, only Bellah and Coleman are careful to note that their models are not dependent upon the absolute linearity of differentiation. Like Eisenstadt, Bellah (1964: 358) and Coleman (1970:76) are willing to foresee stagnation and breakdown as potential outcomes of evolution. Martin's model, which accounts for both linear and dialectical trends, does not assume that universal trends such as differentiation always occur (Martin, 1978:3). The dialectical model of Berger and Luckmann has been included for discussion primarily because it does not maintain a linear perspective.

The models of Durkheim, Weber, Wach, Berger and Luckmann, Wilson, and Fenn are also limited by their failure to specify the defining systemic characteristics of evolutionary stages. Parsons is the most explicit in elaborating the variables of cultural change and the historical details of each evolutionary period. Bellah and Coleman focus upon only one of Parsons's change variables--differentiation--but present a more systematic explanation of the characteristics of religious organizations and their symbol systems at each stage of religious or civil religious development. Martin presents defining categories for the basic patterns of secularization
without reliance on an explicitly historical evolutionary sequence. Of the two criteria for useful evolutionary models noted by Eisenstadt, avoidance of rigid linear assumptions and specification of systemic characteristics, Bellah's model of religious evolution, Martin's model of secularization, and Coleman's model of civil religious evolution meet both criteria.

The models of Durkheim, Weber, and Wach serve as intellectual predecessors of the Parsonian evolutionary model, elaborated and adapted by Bellah and Coleman. The classic theories of religious change advanced by Durkheim, Weber, and Wach are highly congruent with Coleman's model of civil religious change, stated in Propositions I through IV. Propositions I through IV, and Proposition IV in particular, propose nothing radically new for the sociology of religion beyond inclusion of the concept of civil religious evolution as an aspect of religious evolution under the specific conditions of social differentiation and religious pluralism. Additional variables and cultural configurations affecting civil religion are suggested by Martin's contemporary secularization theory. The Berger and Luckmann dialectic model does not directly contradict Propositions I through IV, but neither does it provide a supportive framework. Berger and Luckmann take a privatistic position, similar to that of Bryan Wilson and Richard Fenn, which foresees traditional religious systems losing significance for modern society. Neither Berger and Luckmann, Wilson, nor Fenn would predict
the renewal of any overarching religious symbol system, including civil religion, in modern societies. Privatism has no place for Proposition I, which affirms the existence of American civil religion. It is concluded that the four basic propositions concerning American civil religion receive their greatest support from Durkheimian and Parsonian evolutionary thought, and the least support from modern privatism. The contemporary theories which offer the strongest conceptual framework for the study of civil religion are the theories of Bellah, Martin, and Coleman.
CHAPTER XII

THE AMERICAN CASE

John Coleman (1970), as we have seen, has proposed three types of civil religion in modern societies: (1) continued undifferentiated civil religion, either church sponsored or state sponsored; (2) secular nationalism; and (3) differentiated civil religion. Church-sponsored civil religion is observable when an established religious tradition provides the context for sacred civic symbols, as in the case of the Khomeini government of Iran. State-sponsored civil religion, exemplified by Restoration Japan, may be observed when the political system institutes a self-transcendent cultus. Secular nationalism, a functional alternative to civil religion typified by the U.S.S.R. arises when a historical religious tradition is associated with a pre-revolutionary government and cannot serve as a symbol of a modernizing revolutionary state. Coleman believes that the third type of civil religion, differentiated civil religion, is observable only in the United States. In a highly differentiated society like the United States, civil religion tends to follow the pattern of differentiation and move away from either political or religious sponsorship. And in a religiously plural society like that of the United States, there is no need for the functions of civil religion to be performed by
a secular version of nationalism. The historical strength of the American religious tradition, combined with the absence of religious establishment, set the stage for the differentiation of a religiously oriented but non-church-sponsored civil religious system. The two specific conditions associated with the rise of differentiated civil religion are institutional differentiation and religious pluralism.

In part III of the present study, theory and research have been cited to support the thesis of a differentiated civil religion in the United States. Most significant are Wimberly's (1976) empirical findings that a measurable, civil religious dimension of belief is distinguishable from either religious or political belief systems. Coleman's theory and Proposition IV would predict that Wimberly's findings of a differentiated civil religion are unique to the United States. Cross-cultural empirical research by Cole and Hammond (1974) points to a similar conclusion. It is Hammond's (1974) thesis that in modern, religiously plural societies, the function of societal conflict resolution moves away from the domain of traditional religion and comes under the control of legal institutions. The legal structures of modern society become the new source of moral integration. In Hammond's research with Cole, the following argument is tested:

. . . (1) The condition of religious pluralism creates special problems for social interaction; (2) social interaction in such situations is facilitated by a
universalistic legal system; (3) a universalistic legal system may, therefore, be elevated to the sacred realm (Cole and Hammond, 1974:187).

The major variables, examined for ninety-two nations, were religious pluralism, societal complexity, and legal development. Religious pluralism, measured by the number of religious groups comprising at least 2 percent of a society's population, was expected to be related to the level of society complexity, measured by indicators of levels of communication, technology, bureaucratic organization, and money and market complex. Both pluralism and societal complexity were expected to be related to degree of legal development, measured by the extent of legal repression. Evidence of repression signified that legal development was low, while absence of repressive laws indicated a higher level of legal development (Cole and Hammond, 1974:181-183). Analysis of data found support for the hypothesized inverse relationship between legal development and societal complexity. Although religious pluralism itself is a type of societal complexity, it was expected and found to have an inhibiting effect on "secular" or economic indicators of complexity. Analysis of data also indicated a positive relationship between legal development and societal complexity. Societies with the highest levels of legal development were the most complex. Additionally, data revealed that, as religious pluralism increases, the positive association between societal complexity and legal development also increases. Figure 8 illustrates the findings. Substituting the terms used in Propositions I through IV for the
Fig. 8. Relationship between Religious Pluralism, Societal Complexity, and Legal Development (Cole and Hammond, 1974)
terms used by Cole and Hammond, their results could be dia-
gramed as they appear in figure 9. Figure 9 leaves the direc-
tion of the relationship between religious pluralism and
institutional differentiation unspecified, as Cole and
Hammond's data on this relationship are questionable.

Cole and Hammond are not reluctant to apply their find-
ings to the issue of civil religious development.

The question that arises is to what civil religious
implications there may be in the role played by legal in-
stitutions in a religiously plural society. It can be
ventured that if people experience conflict, they attempt
to resolve it. . . . It is here that the law may be turned
to, especially to the degree that it is "universalistic,"
thus overriding whatever parochial conditions have stood
in the way. . . . But if . . . the agencies of this legal
order use the language and imagery of purpose and destiny,
if they not only resolve differences but also justify
their resolution, it is easy to see how something identifi-
able as civil religion could emerge (Cole and Hammond,

Cole and Hammond suggest that, in a religiously plural soci-
ety, conflict can be generated through a clash of religious
meaning systems. If the conflict is to be resolved, some
overarching system of meaning must develop which can integrate
the conflicting systems. If this overarching system of inte-
gration, the legal system, adopts universal language and acts
to legitimate behavior as well as to resolve conflict, it
constitutes a system of civil religion. Cole and Hammond
expect most plural, complex, and legally developed nations
to feature civil religious orientations in their legal sys-
tems. The United States, although not included in the sample
of nations, is singled out as the society most likely to ex-
hibit civil religious symbols in its legal order.
Fig. 9. Hypothesized Relationship between Religious Pluralism, Institutional Differentiation, and Differentiated Civil Religion
Certainly central to the alleged American civil religion is the notion of "fair play" (see Bellah, 1967). . . . The legal order has institutionalized this ideal as the doctrine of due process, and thus it is in the legal arena that fair play is most often celebrated. Such a process, we think, illustrates our contention that the legal order may take on erstwhile religious duties. More than this, insofar as the notion of due process is not an isolated cultural item but part of a coherent ideology with its accompanying institutional arrangements, we may speak of this "package" as a civil religion (Cole and Hammond, 1974:187).

Other nations found to rank high in societal complexity, religious pluralism, and legal development (e.g., Bulgaria, May- ala, The Philippines, and Trinidad) are treated as developing nations whose level of civil religious development should be reflected in their legal systems. Cole and Hammond do not consider their findings to be conclusive but suggest that civil religious development is a cross-culturally observable evolutionary phenomenon related to other indices of societal development. The clearest indicator of civil religious development today may be found in the legal system of the societies under study.

**American Civil Religion and the Judicial System**

The results of Cole and Hammond's study point to legal systems as institutional carriers of civil religion. Although in all societies the legal order is an arm of the state, in the United States the governmental structure of checks and balances results in a judicial system which is semi-autonomous from legislative and executive branches. Officials in the judicial system are appointed by executives to rule on laws
enacted by legislators, but judicial officials also have the power to declare laws unconstitutional and to judge elected officials for legal offenses. To the extent that the judicial system can override decisions made in other governmental systems, the judicial system may be seen as partially differentiated from other branches of the state. In the United States the judiciary has the autonomy to take a prophetic stance with regard to other political and social institutions.

Phillip Hammond hypothesizes that the American system of religious pluralism is the key variable which contributed to the expansion of judicial influence in the United States. In a religiously plural society, the judiciary is required to maintain order and develop universally acceptable explanations for legal decisions. With the expansion of the judicial system, "the judiciary has adapted the task of articulating the collective moral architecture" (Hammond, 1974:129). Hammond cites several United States Supreme Court cases which illustrate the "developing rhetoric" of civil religion as revealed through the judicial system. The cases cited by Hammond all concern issues of church-state separation, a major legal arena whereby the society's "commitment to religious liberty (pluralism) makes impossible the documents (precedents, rhetoric) of any one religious tradition; so a new religion is found" (Hammond, 1974:133).

In Church of the Holy Trinity v. United States, 143 U.S. 226 (1892), the "moral architecture" constructed by the Court reflected the Protestant civic piety of the nineteenth century.
The Court held that a law prohibiting the importation of aliens for labor did not prevent a church from hiring a foreign minister. The Court affirmed that "we are a Christian people, and the morality of the country is deeply ingrafted upon Christianity" (quoted in Hammond, 1974:130). By the time of United States v. Macintosh, 283 U.S. 605 (1931), the Court had developed a separationist position with regard to church and state. The Court was asked to decide if citizenship should be denied to a person unwilling to fight in the nation's defense. Although the Court acknowledged the right of freedom of religious belief, it held that the nation's goal of survival was primary. Citizenship was denied, justified by the ultimate objective of national survival. In two subsequent conscientious objector cases, United States v. Seeger, 380 U.S. 163· (1965) and Welsh v. United States, 398 U.S. 333 (1970), the Court broadened the concept of religious belief to include views other than orthodox monotheistic beliefs. Both Seeger and Welsh were granted conscientious objector status on the basis of "moral, ethical or religious beliefs about what is right or wrong" (quoted in Hammond, 1974:131). The Welsh decision affirmed that in a religiously plural society an individual's own perception of his beliefs as religious was of prime importance in the Court's recognition of them as religious. With the Seeger and Welsh decisions, "'religion' for legal purposes becomes simply 'conscience'" (Hammond, 1974:132). The multiplication of religious definitions within society required the Supreme Court
to redefine religion in a way to reduce religious conflict and foster social integration. The authority to make decisions on issues of ultimacy as they affect the nation illustrates Hammond's thesis that the courts are the architects of "common religion" or "civil religion" (Hammond, 1974:133-134).

Legal scholar Robert McCloskey (1972) agrees with Hammond that both the structure and ethical influence of the United States Supreme Court have expanded in the past forty years, beginning with the period of the Stone Court (1940-1945) established after the New Deal. The majority of major Court decisions restricting the role of religion in the public schools (see figure 7 of the present study) occurred during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Americans have learned to expect the Court to perform the dual functions of interpreting and applying the law fairly and ethically to the issue under consideration. "America does expect the Court to be both courtlike and statesmanlike, a law-finding and a value-judging agency, and the modern Court has enthusiastically endorsed that dual conception of its duty" (McCloskey, 1972:294). The expectation for ethical judgements by the Court does not imply that all Americans agree with the ethical outcomes of judicial decisions, or that all Americans even support the judiciary's right to render such decisions. Public protest of the Engle (1962) and Schempp (1963) decisions declaring public school-sponsored prayer and devotional Bible reading unconstitutional was widespread (see pp. 169-170 of this volume). Segments of
the public were also outraged at the desegregation decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). *Goldstein v. Collin*, 99 U.S. 277 (1976), in which the Court ruled that an American Nazi group could demonstrate publicly in a community with a large Jewish population, is a recent example of a judicial decision which aroused public criticism on a national scale. McCloskey suggests that public reaction to a judicial decision is often confused due to the failure to distinguish between the functions of the courts.

I suggest that our evaluation of a Supreme Court decision—or of a whole line of judicial conduct—ordinarily depends on one or more of three different judgement components: the question of what have been called above historical-technical standards, the question of power, and the question of value. In other words, in criticizing a judicial action we say that the Court has misread the Constitution, or that it has overtaxed its power capabilities, or that it has chosen the wrong ethical solution (McCloskey, 1972:292).

The very fact that judicial decisions are often unpopular with the public suggests that the ethical function of the judiciary becomes at times a prophetic expression of the values of American civil religion. Martin Shapiro provides some general examples of the prophetic stance historically assumed by the Supreme Court.

In the last analysis there is something compelling about an institution that can say with authority that the south may not preserve slavery any longer, that one man's vote is not to be worth seventeen times that of another, that the police too must obey the law, that the poor and ignorant are entitled to the same legal protection as the rich and educated, that one man may not tell another man what he may not read or what he must pray. The ability of the Court to say these things, not on the basis that they would help us achieve more than the Russians or
soothe powerful and demanding social interests, but because they were somehow right, returns us to the mysterious (quoted in McCloskey, 1972:vii).

There are numerous subjects of modern Court decision which illustrate the civil religious functions of the judiciary. The separation of church and state issue explored by Hammond (1974) and the issue of religion in the public schools, discussed in chapter X of this volume, both directly address the society's role with regard to multiple definitions of ultimate reality. The civil rights decisions, such as Brown, evoked the ethical principle of fairness while interpreting the law to protect the rights of minority citizens. Less obvious in their civil religious implications, but relevant nonetheless, are numerous other judicial decisions concerned with the civil religious values of individual freedom and social equality. A recent illustrative example is the United States Supreme Court decision on the death penalty in Furman v. Georgia, 408 U.S. 238 (1972).

Furman concerned two ethical issues: the right of the state to impose the death penalty and the equal application of punishment. The three defendants in the case, who had received death sentences, appealed their cases to the Supreme Court arguing that the death penalty constituted "cruel and unusual punishment" and therefore violated the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution. The Court refused to rule that capital punishment per se is cruel and unusual. The Court did rule that the death penalty was unconstitutional in these three cases because its imposition constituted racial
discrimination. The Court left the way open for states to develop nondiscriminatory capital punishment laws to be applied fairly and uniformly. In Furman the Court sidestepped the issue of the morality of capital punishment itself to address another moral issue: social inequality. The Court noted that the death penalty was rarely invoked, and, that when imposed, was carried out primarily on blacks or members of other minority groups. Justice Brennan, concurring with the Furman decision, noted that "when the punishment of death is inflicted in a trivial number of cases in which it is legally available, the conclusion is virtually inescapable that it is being inflicted arbitrarily" (Furman v. Georgia, 1972:239). Justice Marshall, noting that capital punishment was inflicted more often upon blacks compared to whites, more upon men compared to women, and more upon the poor compared to other economic classes, made a prophetic call for legislative change. "So long as capital sanction is used only against the forlorn, easily forgotten members of society, legislators are content to maintain the status quo, because change would draw attention to the problem and concern might develop" (Furman v. Georgia, 1972:365-366).

The morality of capital punishment itself was a secondary issue in Furman. Justice Brennan, in a concurring opinion, attempted to define "cruel and unusual" punishment. Brennan states that the Court cannot define "cruel and unusual" punishment in general, but must instead decide each case of punishment to determine if it is cruel and unusual.
Constitutional guidelines for evaluation of punishment are based on three fundamental principles: that (1) "even the vilest criminal remains a human being possessed of common dignity"; (2) "the State must not arbitrarily inflict a severe punishment"; and (3) "a severe punishment must not be unacceptable to contemporary society" (Furman v. Georgia, 1972:272-286). The civil religious nature of the three principles is self-evident, as the principles directly concern the American civil religious values of human dignity and social equality. The final guiding principle of the Court evaluates the society and its moral consensus as the final arbitrator of the life or death of its citizens. Subsequently, in Gregg v. Georgia, 96 S. Ct. 2909 (1976), the Court went a step beyond Furman to decide that capital punishment is not invariably unconstitutional, leaving the way open for state legislators to develop acceptable death penalty statutes. The Furman and Gregg decisions demonstrate the Supreme Court's active role in constructing the moral architecture of the nation.

Several examples have been selected from United States Supreme Court cases to illustrate Hammond's (1974) thesis that interpretation of the law has civil religious implications. The judicial decisions chosen as examples are by no means randomly selected. Contrary decisions on similar issues could be found. However, the direction of judicial decisions, or the popularity of such decisions, are irrelevant to their consideration as civil religious. Whether the courts rule that capital punishment is or is not unconstitutional, the
courts are addressing an ethical issue with ultimate implications for state and citizen. In the United States, the judicial system is in a unique position with regard to the legitimation of civil religious values. The rhetoric of American civil religion can be found outside the courtroom, in politicians' speeches or clergymen's sermons, but nowhere except inside the courtroom does the rhetoric of American civil religion have such binding moral and legal force. Hammond questions the relationship between the generalized American civil religion espoused in other social institutions, compared to the more particularistic moral architecture constructed by the courts.

What is not so clear yet are the connections between the civil religion as theology and the parallel civil religion as moral architecture. How does "God," as portrayed in Presidential speech, relate to "due process," as portrayed in Supreme Court opinion (Hammond, 1974:155)?

An answer to Hammond's question is suggested by Propositions I through IV and Coleman's thesis of a differentiated civil religion in the United States. If American civil religion is particularly formulated and legitimated by the judicial system in the United States, then American civil religion is not entirely differentiated from the state, but is semi-differentiated to the extent that the judiciary is itself semi-differentiated from other governmental institutions. Further examination of the role performed by the American judicial system is recommended in conjunction with study of the evolution of American civil religion.
Conclusion

Coleman (1970) proposes that under conditions of institutional differentiation and religious pluralism, a differentiated form of civil religion will develop. Cole and Hammond (1974) present cross-cultural data which suggest that the conditions necessary for the development of civil religion are the absence of a universally established religion, religious pluralism, and high levels of societal and legal complexity. The United States is a society which meets these criteria, and therefore one in which differentiated civil religion would be expected to develop. Cole and Hammond predict that the conflict resolution function of a society's legal system will serve as an important indicator of the differentiation of civil religion. Examination of the American legal system, particularly the judiciary, reveals numerous examples of conflict resolution legitimated by what Bellah (1975) defines as civil religious ideals. Data cited in preceding chapters (part III) suggest that, although American civil religion is differentiated from other American institutions, highly generalized civil religious symbols are found in many American institutions and are embodied in the personal belief systems of many citizens. If Hammond's thesis is correct, the most value-specific source of American civil religion is the judicial system, where Hammond believes the "not-so-elementary forms" of American civil religion reside today (Hammond, 1974:135).
CHAPTER XIII

CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH

In the preceding chapter, Coleman's theory of the evolution of civil religion was applied to the United States, the society most likely to demonstrate evidence of a differentiated civil religion. But what of other modern societies? If the development of civil religion follows the lines of cultural evolution as stated in Proposition IV, differentiated civil religion could be expected in other differentiated societies. An additional variable intervenes in the evolution of civil religion, however: the history of church-state relations in the given society. According to Coleman's hypothesis, a society can be differentiated but lacking differentiated civil religion if it lacks a tradition of church-state separation. Great Britain, for example, is a differentiated society culturally similar to the United States. Yet, the British traditions of an established church and the divine right of kings are manifest today in the retention of a church-sponsored civil religion. State Shinto in Restoration Japan represents Coleman's other type of continued undifferentiated civil religion: state-sponsored civil religion. The modern U.S.S.R. illustrates the secular alternative to civil religion, secular nationalism. The cases of modern Great Britain, Restoration Japan, and the U.S.S.R. will be
examined as examples of the variation in civil religious evolution in modern and modernizing societies.

Coleman (1970:70) states that the absence of civil religion should not be assumed merely because a differentiated system of civil religion has not appeared within a society. In the absence of differentiated civil religion, the functions of civil religion may be performed either by a church-sponsored or a state-sponsored type.

**Church-Sponsored Civil Religion:**

**Modern Great Britain**

Civil religion is church-sponsored when an established religious tradition within the society provides the context for sacred civic symbols. Although there are ample examples of church-sponsored civil religion in the non-Christian world (e.g., modern Israel and the Islamic, Khomeini government of Iran), in Great Britain it is historical Christianity which sponsors the symbols of civil religion. The "civil religious concepts of the sacredness of the monarchical form of government in the divine right of kings" and "the notion of the manifest destiny of the Anglo-Saxon nations in the unfolding providence of world history" are British traditions (Coleman, 1970:70). In modern Britain, the monarchy retains little overt political influence, but the ceremonial influence of the monarchy is still pronounced. In a symbolic study of the British Coronation Service, Edward Shils and Michael Young (1953) present a description of the civil religious functions retained by the modern British monarchy.
Shils and Young (1953:65) base their study of the British Coronation Service on the assumption of the existence of a "general moral consensus of society" founded upon the standards and beliefs of societal members. Common consensual standards in Western societies include generosity, charity, loyalty, justice, respect for authority, dignity of the individual, and the right to individual freedom. These consensual moral values "restrain men's egotism" and "enable society to hold itself together" (Shils and Young, 1953:65). The general moral consensus referred to by Shils and Young can be recognized as Bellah's (1976a) concept of general civil religion, which provides the religious discipline necessary for responsible moral citizenship and an integrated society.

The special expression of moral consensus, or general civil religion, occurs during occasions of national celebration. Ceremonial occasions are important events in a society's life during which societal mores are ritually affirmed and renewed. Shils and Young (1953:67) contend that in British society "the Coronation Service itself is a series of ritual affirmations of the moral values necessary to a well-governed and good society." Shils and Young present a symbolic analysis of the Coronation Service itself, and of the public participation in this civil religious celebration.
The British Coronation Service

The central symbol of the service is the monarch's vow to abide by the moral standards of the society. Each portion of the service reaffirms the monarch's obedience to God and to the Church of England.

The recognition

The presentation of the monarch to the assembly by the Archbishop signifies Church sponsorship of monarchical authority. "When the Archbishop presents the Queen to the four sides of the 'theatre,' he is asking the assembly to reaffirm their allegiance to her not so much as an individual as the incumbent of an office of authority" (Shils and Young, 1953: 68).

The oath

On taking the oath of office, the monarch promises to govern all British subjects in accordance with the laws of state and the laws of God. By doing this, the monarch acknowledges "the superiority of the transcendent moral standards and their divine source, and therewith the sacred character of the moral standards of British society" (Shils and Young, 1953:68).

Presenting the Holy Bible

The Bible presented to the monarch symbolizes God's law and will, which are to continually inspire the monarch's public decisions. "The Bible is the vessel of God's intention,
a source of continuous inspiration in the moral regulation of society" (Shils and Young, 1953:69).

**The anointing**

The Archbishop anoints the monarch with oil, a symbolic act which sanctifies her assumption of office. The anointing continues a tradition which began with the anointing of King Solomon, and has continued for all British rulers. After the anointing, the monarch "shows her submission before the Archbishop as God's agent, kneeling before him while he implores God to bless her" (Shils and Young, 1953:69).

**Presenting the sword and the orb**

The sword presented to the monarch symbolizes the power to enforce social order. The sword is a dual symbol of authority and potential destruction to any who would disrupt society. Throughout the remainder of the ceremony, the sword is carried unsheathed in front of the monarch, to remind subjects of "the protection which a good authority can offer them when they themselves adhere to the moral law, and of the wrathful punishment which will follow their deviation" (Shils and Young, 1953:70). The monarch is next given bracelets of sincerity and wisdom and robed. These actions symbolize the transformation of a private individual into a public head of state. Once transformed, the monarch is invested with a sacred orb, symbolic of "the wider sphere of her power and of the responsibilities for its moral use" (Shils and Young, 1953:70).
The Benediction

The duties of subjects are featured in the Archbishop's Benediction which asks God to give the monarch "'wise counselors and upright magistrates; leaders of integrity in learning and labor; a devout, learned, and useful clergy; honest, peaceable, and dutiful citizens'" (quoted in Shils and Young, 1953:70). The monarch is admonished to obey God, and her subjects are in turn commanded to obey her.

Shils and Young's analysis of the Coronation Service reveals a central theme of church sponsorship of civil religious symbols. The Archbishop of the Church of England, as God's representative, invests the new ruler with authority. The religious investiture of political authority aptly illustrates Coleman's concept of church-sponsored civil religion. According to Shils and Young, the significance of church-sponsored civic rituals has not disappeared in the modern era. For example, the last Coronation Service and Procession were "shared and celebrated by nearly all the people in Britain" in "a great nation-wide communion" (Shils and Young, 1953:70-71). The celebration was widely exposed on radio, television, and in magazines and newspaper accounts. Along with the many explanations offered for the popularity of the Coronation (e.g., commercialization and the British love of ceremony), Shils and Young (1953:71) suggest that public interest was motivated primarily by desire for "communion with the sacred." Just as the Coronation Service was a religious event, public involvement also took on aspects of religious
ritual. Gift giving, a typical feature of many religious celebrations, was evident in several manifestations. Many subjects sent gifts to the Queen, community organizations gave gifts to children and the elderly, and many people celebrated the occasion by giving gifts within their own families. Shils and Young (1953:74) compare the public festivities to an orgy in the sense that orgiastic expression commonly follows a religious experience.

Shils and Young's observations also reveal examples of the civil religious function performed by the Coronation. The Coronation Service is a socially integrating ceremony. Public participation in the last Coronation went beyond the level of individual entertainment to become a collective affirmation of societal unity. Family unity, symbolized by devotion to the Royal Family, was also fostered by involvement in the Coronation.

The Coronation, much like Christmas, was a time for drawing closer the bonds of the family, for reasserting its solidarity and for re-emphasizing the values of the family—generosity, loyalty, love—which are at the same time the fundamental values necessary for the well-being of the larger society (Shils and Young, 1953:73). But family solidarity was not reinforced at the expense of national unity. "On this occasion one family was knit together with another in one great national family through identification with the monarchy" (Shils and Young, 1953:76). Shils and Young believe that even class divisions were at low ebb during the time of the last Coronation. They observe that a "degree of moral consensus" has developed in the
various classes in modern Britain, along with a "decline in the hostility of the British working and middle classes towards the symbols of the society as a whole and towards the authorities vested with those symbols" (Shils and Young, 1953: 76). Class accommodation is not attributed to the Coronation, but the accommodation observed during the Coronation is considered symptomatic of the integrative power of British church-sponsored civil religion.

The monarchy is one pervasive institution, standing above all others, which plays a part in a vital way comparable to the function of the medieval church . . . --the function of integrating diverse elements into a whole (Shils and Young, 1953:79).

Shils and Young's analysis of the Coronation's integrative function minimizes genuine sources of societal conflict which may not have been evident at the particular time of the Coronation Service. Shils and Young's treatment of British church-sponsored civil religion lacks Bellah's (1975) concept of the "broken covenant"--a civil religion which can both unify and divide society.

Shils and Young cite several examples of the British monarchy's capacity to legitimate other social institutions. Military organizations, in particular, have ceremonial ties to the Crown. Other organizations with royal sponsorship include a multiplicity of voluntary associations, such as the Royal Society and numerous educational and medical facilities (e.g., St. Mary's Hospital and the University of London). Sponsorship by the monarchy endows each sponsored organization
with a sort of charisma binding each organization to the structure of the societal moral system.

Every corporate body which has some connection with the sacred properties, the charisma, of the Crown thereby has infused into it a reminder of the moral obligations which extend beyond its own corporate boundaries. It is tied, so to speak, to the central value system of the society as a whole through its relationship with Royalty (Shils and Young, 1953:79).

It is not only institutions which are both defined and integrated by the monarchy. Monarchical charisma can extend to individual subjects, especially during times of ritual celebration. On the day of the Coronation Service, crowds waited patiently in the rain for some glimpse of the Queen, "waiting to enter into contact with the mighty powers who are symbolically, and to some extent, really responsible for the care and protection of their basic values" (Shils and Young, 1953:75). The legitimacy of the British monarch's authority is derived from a transcendent authority. Each ritual of the Coronation Service is designed to symbolize the monarch's obedience to a higher power. When the Queen kneels before the Archbishop, for example, she indicates submission to God's higher authority. The sword presented to the monarch is the symbol of God's prophetic judgement, to be enacted through the Crown, against any violator of society's laws. Under Shils and Young's examination, the Coronation Service reveals rich imagery concerning the integrative, legitimating, and prophetic functions of the modern British monarchy.

Shils and Young's analysis of the British Coronation clearly illustrates the form by which church-sponsored civil
religion can survive the modernization of a society. In the British case, the constitutional monarchy is recognized as the symbolic authority of the society, and this symbolic authority is clearly derived from the historic sponsorship of the monarchy by the established Church of England. Many British subjects who are not Church of England members, or who are not religious, still participate in the civil religious function of the monarchy. In this respect the British case differs from the situation of a nation like the Soviet Union where the monarchy was destroyed by revolution and modernization. In the U.S.S.R. a system of secular nationalism developed to replace church-sponsored civil religion. Shils and Young suggest that Great Britain did not become a society of secular nationalism because public hostility against political authority was displaced from the monarchy to the leaders of competing political parties. As the political power of the British monarchy slowly declined, its symbolic authority was tolerated and even appreciated by unthreatened politicians. "When protected from the full blast of destructiveness by its very powerlessness, royalty is able to bask in the sunshine of an affection unadulterated by its opposite" (Shils and Young, 1953:77). Church-sponsored civil religion might continue to persist in the modern or modernizing state only if its structures are used as an aid to the acquisition and maintenance of political power (e.g., the Khomeini government of Iran) or are considered politically neutral, as in the case of the British monarchy. Despite
the decline of the political power of the British Crown, Shils and Young conclude that the monarchy retains considerable social and moral significance for the integration of British subjects, the legitimation of institutions, and the prophetic guidance of the society's course in history.

Within its society, popular constitutional monarchy enjoys almost universal recognition in this capacity, and it is therefore enabled to heighten the moral and civic sensibility of the society and to permeate it with symbols of those values to which the sensitivity responds. . . . The Coronation provided at one time and for practically the entire society such an intensive contact with the sacred that we believe we are justified in interpreting it as we have done in this essay, as a great act of national communion (Shils and Young, 1953:80).

State-Sponsored Civil Religion: Restoration Japan

Civil religion sponsored by the state occurs in societies where the political system institutes a self-transcendent cultus. The institution of a state-sponsored form of civil religion is most likely to occur in a society characterized by competing religious traditions and an authoritarian political system. When no religion is powerful enough to perform civil religious functions for the society, the state may assume these functions to intensify its power and establish its authority. Imperial Rome is one historical example of a society with state-sponsored civil religion. A modern example is found in the State Shinto of Restoration Japan. State Shinto was based on the belief in the divinity of the historical line of Japanese emperors. State Shinto was instituted as the state religion of Japan in 1868, at the
beginning of the Meiji era and was not formally disestablished until December, 1945. During this period, State Shinto functioned as a form of religious nationalism despite official claims in later years that the Shinto national cult was not technically a "religion." Analysis of the religious origins of State Shinto during the Tokugawa period and of the civil religious functions assumed by State Shinto during the Meiji period provides evidence that State Shinto exhibited the essential characteristics of a state-sponsored civil religion.

Robert Bellah (1957) found that the historical religious roots of State Shinto could be traced to the primitive, tribal religion of early Japan. Bellah (1957:87) notes that "the earliest Japanese word for government is matsurigoto, which means religious observances or worship. This would seem to indicate the lack of differentiation of function between the religious and political spheres." During the Tokugawa period (1600-1868), the historic lack of differentiation between religion and politics continued, manifest in the popular slogan sonno (revere the emperor) and the development of the concept of kokutai (national body) (Bellah, 1957:99). The ideas of sonno and kokutai were widespread, promulgated by two intellectual movements, the Kokugaku School and the Mito School. The major religious goal of the Kokugaku School was the restoration of the emperor to power. The ideas of the Kokugaku School proliferated during the nineteenth century and influenced the subsequent Restoration in 1868 (Bellah, 1957:102). The Mito School developed the idea of
kokutai as "a concept of the state in which religious, political and familistic ideals are indissolubly merged" (Bellah, 1957:104). The resulting national religion was to be centered on the figure of the emperor. Bellah concludes that the ideology of sonno-kokutai had an impact on the political modernization of Japan and contributed to the establishment of State Shinto.

The civil religion of Restoration Japan was based on three dogmas of: (1) "divine imperial sovereignty," (2) "special guardianship extended to the land and its people by ancestral deities," and (3) "benevolent destiny" (Haltom, 1947:9, 13, 19). According to the dogma of divine imperial sovereignty, the emperor's bloodline may be traced back to the sun-goddess, Amaterasu Omikami, the ancestress of the Japanese state. The emperor is considered to be divine because he is the direct living embodiment of sacred ancestors of the nation's past. According to D. C. Haltom's analysis of State Shinto, "Shinto reaches its highest form of manifestation in the worship of the emperor" (Holtom, 1947:12). The second Shinto dogma, which holds that the spirits of the sacred ancestors extend a special guardianship to Japan, is signified by the concept of Japan as "the Land of the Gods." The dogma of sacred guardianship affirms the transcendent nature of Japanese history.

From the beginning they have received the impress of the creative wills of divine ancestors who foresaw the far-distant future and gave to land and race and institutions an initial divine character that must be forever theirs. It means that these ancestral deities are eternally
living in the spirit world from which they mold the destiny of the present according to their unchanging purposes. The existence of such superlative benefits, manifested in the form of sacred historical absolutes and immediate superhuman guidance, entails corresponding responsibility and loyalty on the part of the living (Holtom, 1947:14).

From the dogma of ancestral guidance through history, the third dogma of benevolent destiny is derived. Japan is believed to be the "savior" of the rest of the world. Japan's mission in history is to expand the nation and extend the Japanese way to all other people of the world. The Japanese slogan "the whole world under one roof" symbolizes Japan's "special divine commission to expand sovereignty and righteousness over ever widening territories" (Holtom, 1947:20). State Shinto, in its basic dogmas, clearly fulfills Coleman's (1970:69) definition of civil religion as a religious symbol system which relates the roles of citizen and society in history to the conditions of ultimate meaning.

The civil religious functions of State Shinto were performed by the Japanese government. The first critical function addressed by the government at the beginning of the Meiji period was that of integrating Japan's heterogeneous population. The feudal heritage of Japan had left diverse rival clans scattered over the countryside. Japan was also religiously diverse. Restoration Japan housed Buddhists, Confucianists, Hindus, Moslims, Taoists, Christians, Secular Shintoists, and adherents of a variety of folk religions. The Japanese government needed an overarching symbol of national unity to integrate diverse local and religious
groups, and State Shinto provided this type of unifying symbolism. The newly restored imperial government in 1868 first attempted to establish unity by suppressing competing religions. Buddhism, which was associated with the discredited Tokugawa regime, was criticized. Christianity, a symbol of "Western imperialism," was banned until 1873. Later, under pressure from the West, religious pluralism was officially tolerated as long as the overarching State Shinto tradition was accepted as the highest ethical authority. In order to facilitate religious integration, the Japanese government began in 1899 to insist that State Shinto was not itself a religion. Japanese Christians and Buddhists eventually accepted State Shinto as a non-competitor and adopted policies of coexistence. The National Christian Council of Japan stated that "we accept the definition of the government that the Shinto Shrine is non-religious" (Holtom, 1947:169). Coleman believes that the religious integration attempted through State Shinto was only partially successful, thus illustrating one of the structural weaknesses of state-sponsored civil religion: conflict with historical religions. The dogmas of State Shinto came into particular conflict with the tenets of Buddhism and Christianity.

Against the Buddhist doctrine of pacifism, State Shinto espoused the theory of the holy war. In particular, it shared with imperial Rome the apothesis of a living human in emperor worship. This could never rest easy on the Christians with their tradition against idolatry (Coleman, 1970:72).
Despite the structural weakness noted by Coleman, State Shinto proved to be a powerful integrating force for many Japanese. A traditional avenue of integration, the school was used for this purpose. In 1899, Order Number Twelve was issued by the Restoration government, bringing an end to all specifically religious instruction in public and private schools; instead, instructions in State Shinto were to be substituted. The goal was the replacement of traditional religion with religious nationalism which would unify the society for the accomplishment of its divine mission (Holtom, 1947:76).

A church-sponsored form of civil religion bestows an established, religiously based legitimacy on a political authority. In the case of state-sponsored civil religion, the political order establishes its own legitimacy by proclaiming the state to be a self-transcendent cult. All institutions which serve the national cult are automatically legitimated, and opposing institutions (such as competing religions) are discredited. Yet, State Shinto might never have aroused world attention if it had not been used to legitimate Japanese territorial expansion. The dogma of benevolent destiny, accompanied by an effective military, resulted in the extension of Japanese control to an overseas empire. Japanese hegemony was accompanied by the establishment of Shinto shrines in conquered territories.

Given the nature of the Japanese state and its inseparable association with Shinto belief and ritual, it is impossible to think of a political control apart from a
vigorous determination to secure the subordination of conquered populations to the central religious interest of the state. Where go the Japanese armies there go the Japanese gods (Holtom, 1947:157).

The legitimation of Japanese hegemony illustrates another structural flaw of State Shinto and other state-sponsored forms of civil religion. Coleman (1970:72) observes that there "was no humble sense of the nation being under God which would provide leverage for prophetic critique of the civil religion from the organized churches." Holtom presents a similar observation concerning State Shinto's prophetic failure. "The Japanese state . . . had been a sacred church . . . and, like other churches, it was founded on the arrogation that in the last analysis the validity of its decisions were superhuman and supernatural" (Holtom, 1947:176).

The State Shinto of Restoration Japan exemplifies Coleman's ideal type of state-sponsored civil religion. In a society with a pluralistic religious tradition the Restoration government was able to proclaim itself as a national cult in order to perform the functions of social integration, political self-legitimation, and legitimation of imperialism. Japanese Shinto was subject to both of the structural weaknesses Coleman finds in state-controlled forms of civil religion. First, State Shinto provoked conflict with competing historic religions, most notably Buddhism and Christianity. Secondly, State Shinto fell victim to its own nationally self-transcendent worldview, which led to the Japanese attempt, and failure, at world domination. The case of
Restoration Japan illustrates the structural vulnerability of state-sponsored civil religion when extended beyond the society into the national arena.

**Secular Nationalism: Modern Soviet Union**

Coleman views secular nationalism as a functional alternative to civil religion which is likely to appear "when the historic national religion is either too traditionalistic or too closely tied to prerevolutionary regimes to serve as the civil religion of a modernizing politico-economic regime" (Coleman, 1970:72). Secular nationalism provides a legitimating symbol system which competes with the symbol systems of historic religions. Secular nationalism differs from state-sponsored civil religion primarily in its non-religious or anti-religious self-presentation. Secular nationalism performs civil religious functions for citizens and the society while disclaiming religious significance. The Marxist-Leninist ideology of the U.S.S.R. is a case in point. To the Western observer, Soviet communism is a worldview which "on one hand can be called a religion and, on the other, is totally opposed to religion in all acceptable forms" (Zeldin, 1969:101). Soviet Marxist-Leninism does not conceive of itself as a religion. It is opposed to traditional forms of religion, and yet it can be observed nonetheless to perform religious functions. The debate concerning whether Soviet communism is or is not a religion can be avoided by adoption of Coleman's term, secular nationalism. The religious
functions of Soviet communism are, however, of special interest to the identification of types of civil religion.

Zeldin's (1969:104) analysis of Russian ideology identifies three dogmas which have been transferred from the church-sponsored civil religion of the Czars to Marxist-Leninist secular nationalism: (1) the conception of Moscow as "the Third Rome," (2) "the belief in the kingship of the holy Tsar," and (3) the concept of "wholeness, symbolized in the term pravda, truth and justice." The messianic idea of "holy Moscow" or "Moscow the Third Rome" developed in the fifteenth century when Rome fell to barbarian invasion and Byzantium came under Islamic domination. Moscow was then considered to be the world center of Christianity. Today, Moscow, now the capital of the U.S.S.R., has become the inspirational center of the Third International. The historic belief in the Czar as the divinely inspired teacher of true Christianity has been transferred to the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee, which is the new source of truth. The ideal of the unity of Eastern Slavs, symbolized in the concept of pravda, "is now found in every aspect of Russian communism: in the total integration of life under communism, in the fusing of people into one mass" (Zeldin, 1969:107). Zeldin concludes that significant symbols of modern Soviet secular nationalism are congruent with the symbols of the Czarist-sponsored civil religion of the pre-revolutionary period.
The religious functions of Soviet secular nationalism are apparent in numerous Soviet civil ceremonies, which have been researched by Jennifer McDowell (1974). McDowell (1974:265) classifies Soviet civil ceremonies into two broad categories: (1) private ceremonies such as christenings and weddings, which aid the identity formation of individuals; and (2) public ceremonies, celebrating national or local holidays, which aid social integration. The first Soviet civil ceremonies were established shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution, with new ceremonies being added at various subsequent points in time. The public ceremonies celebrating newly created national holidays, such as January 22 (the overthrow of the Czar), functioned to legitimate and solidify the new regime by clearly symbolizing the break with the past. Private ceremonies, such as the "red baptism" and "red funeral," were established soon after the Civil War but fell into disuse by 1930, only to be officially restored again in the 1950s. McDowell (1974:267) suggests that, in the early years of the Communist regime, the Russian peasants disliked the secularism of the private ceremonies, while Communist Party members and members of the Young Communist League resisted their frivolous ceremonialism.

Soviet scholars, P. P. Kampars and N. M. Zakovich (1967:35-38), present a categorization of Soviet civil ceremonies which assists analysis of the ceremonies' functions. Their major categories are: (1) Revolutionary State Holidays, (2) Laboring Holidays, (3) Civil Rituals and Mode-of-Life
Holidays and Rituals, and (4) Traditional Festivals Dedicated to the Times of Year and to Nature, to Work, and to Songs. The first category, Revolutionary State Holidays, includes a variety of national holidays such as Lenin's birthday (April 22) and the anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution (November 7). Revolutionary State Holidays celebrate the nation's unique history and offer inspiration for the fulfillment of national destiny. A typical celebration of November 7, for example, includes a military parade, athletic demonstrations, and a civilian parade of 200,000 persons. The mass demonstrations of people, shouting slogans such as "'Long Live the Inviolable Unity of the Peoples of our Country!" illustrate the integrative function of Revolutionary State Holidays (McDowell, 1974:271). Laboring Holidays honor the major occupational groups with holidays such as Railway Man's Day, Teacher's Day, Cattle-Breeder's Day, etcetera, and celebrate the anniversaries of particular collective farms and industrial plants (McDowell, 1974:270). Laboring Holidays function to integrate diverse occupational groups into Soviet society and to reinforce economic achievement. Traditional Festivals Dedicated to the Times of the Year, to Nature, to Work, and to Songs include traditional Russian celebrations such as the New Year's celebration. Traditional Festivals, along with National and Laboring Holidays, have received general popular support and have been successful as mechanisms of integration. Civil Rituals and Mode-of-Life Holidays and Rituals include civil christenings,
coming-of-age ceremonies, weddings, major wedding anniversaries, and funeral services. These Civil Rituals have experienced the least acceptance among the Soviet public, especially in rural areas.

These ceremonies have met with the greatest public resistance, for they do not contain the outer, public life of the individual, but rather the inner person. . . . This sphere has traditionally belonged to religion. Thus, at junctures of this type, adherence to traditional religion comes to the surface with the greatest clarity, for these personal ceremonies have at the same time a public character, and in a true sense force the issue of religious or political allegiance (McDowell, 1974:272).

Despite the conflict of allegiances aroused by private Civil Rituals, available data indicate that these ceremonies are beginning to gain in popularity, due to the decline of traditional religiosity fostered by urbanization. One of the few remaining functions of traditional religion in the U.S.S.R., the sanctification of birth, marriage, and death, is gradually coming under the domain of the civil religion of Soviet secular nationalism.

Upon examination, Soviet Marxist-Leninism is found to be a system of secular nationalism—a functional alternative to civil religion. Although defining itself in non-religious terms, Soviet secular nationalism performs the traditional religious functions of social integration and political legitimation. Due to its self-transcendent stance, however, Marxist-Leninism excludes the role of prophetic protest from its civil religion. Coleman observes that the strains inherent in secular nationalism as a replacement for a transcendent civil religion include persecution of religious citizens and
the limitation of religious and civil liberties. Both strains are observable in the modern Soviet Union.

The Russian civil religion includes saints (Lenin entombed), sacred feasts (May Day) and a crucial belief in Russia's special role in unfolding world history as the spearhead of the socialist revolution. In all important ways this secular nationalism is a civil religion. The price for its successful and unchallenged hegemony, however, was religious persecution of Christians and Jews and severe restrictions on religious and civil liberties (Coleman, 1970:73).

Conclusion

Proposition IV asserts that civil religious development follows the general direction of cultural evolution. The civil religious systems of four societies, in different stages of modernization, have served to illustrate the possibilities of civil religious evolution. Great Britain serves as an example of continued undifferentiated church-sponsored civil religion, Restoration Japan exemplifies continued undifferentiated state-sponsored civil religion, and the United States typifies differentiated civil religion (see part IV, chapter II). The key variable Coleman isolates as a predictor of civil religious development is differentiation. Implicit in Coleman's theory is a related variable: religious pluralism. Religious pluralism here refers to something slightly different from simply another manifestation of differentiation. Some societies have had fairly low levels of differentiation but have housed numerous major religions with thousands of varying sects. Historic India, Japan, and China serve as illustrations. Other differentiated societies,
such as modern Italy, are low in religious pluralism, being dominated by a historically established religion. Figure 10 illustrates that variation in levels of differentiation and religious pluralism may be related to the type of civil religious system which is to be expected in the modern or modernizing society. The level of differentiation ranges from the high differentiation of the most developed society to the low of the modernizing society. Religious pluralism is indicated by the society's history of religious toleration versus a historically established religion. The secular nationalism of the U.S.S.R. is characteristic of a society with a history of an established religion (Russian Orthodoxy) and a low level of differentiation. Although the modern Soviet Union is approaching a high level of differentiation today, when Soviet secular nationalism was first imposed after the Bolshevik Revolution, the society was just emerging from feudalism. For secular nationalism to develop under these conditions, the established religion must be perceived as too traditionalistic to perform the civil religious functions for a modernizing government (Coleman, 1970:72).

In modern Great Britain, the established church and its historic sponsorship of the monarchy lost power gradually, as the society moved into the modern era. The monarchy, a major symbol of British church-sponsored civil religion, was retained as a powerful national symbol because it threatened no vested political interest. The monarchy was not viewed as a symbol of failure to modernize and was instead viewed as the
### RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

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Fig. 10. Coleman's Types of Civil Religion (Coleman, 1970)
inspiration behind the empire. Thus, in a highly modern society, a somewhat traditional church-sponsored form of civil religion has been retained.

Japan has historically tolerated a variety of religious traditions, including Buddhism, Taoism, Shintoism, and Christianity. Because no one religion was officially established, political interest groups felt required to institute a state-sponsored cult to perform civil religious functions. The symbols of State Shinto were derived from ancient cultural myths, the only Japanese religious symbols with the potential to unify diverse religious organizations. The traditional Japanese absence of differentiation between religious and political institutions (Bellah, 1957:87) also permitted the establishment of a powerful state-sponsored civil religion.

The United States is a highly differentiated society with a tradition of religious toleration. Religion and politics have been officially differentiated since the writing of the Constitution. Because no religion was established which would perform civil religious functions, church-sponsored civil religion did not develop. The American revolutionary tradition precluded the likelihood of Americans worshipping the head of state. Therefore, an American form of state-sponsored civil religion would not be expected to emerge. Secular nationalism was also an unlikely choice for the United States, given the American tradition of religiosity and opposition to atheism. Instead, if Propositions I through IV are valid, the United States was sufficiently
differentiated and religiously plural to facilitate the emergence of a type of civil religion which was differentiated from both religious and political systems, but manifested in these and other institutions at a high level of generality. This chapter has attempted to place the development of American civil religion into a cross-cultural, evolutionary context. All societies can be conceived of as having civil religious functions. In undifferentiated and even many modern societies, these functions are performed by either an established religion or the state (Coleman, 1970:70). Compared to other societies exhibiting varying degrees of differentiation and religious pluralism, American civil religion can be explained as a differentiated civil religion which developed to perform the specialized religious functions of a modern, plural society which were not being exclusively performed by either religious organizations or the state.
PART V

CONCLUSION
CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has attempted to trace the intellectual development of the sociological concept, "American civil religion," and to order the body of civil religion research into a set of testable propositions. A survey of the literature revealed that the current state of knowledge concerning civil religion (and especially American civil religion) is primarily theoretical. Philosophers, historians, and social scientists have advanced various theoretical models of American civil religion: folk religions, democratic faith, religious nationalism, transcendent universal religion of the nation, and Protestant civic piety (Richey and Jones, 1974). This conceptual diversity presents a stumbling block to contemporary research. Probably the best-known sociological model of American civil religion, the transcendent universal religion documented by Robert Bellah (1967; 1975), has stimulated the greatest amount of empirical research (e.g., Thomas and Flippen, 1972; Wimberly et al., 1976; Wimberly, 1976; Mueller and Sites, 1977; Jolicoeur and Knowles, 1978). Bellah's model of American civil religion has been productive, due in part to its comprehensiveness. Bellah's concept of
transcendent universal American civil religion includes the other basic models of civil religion as elements of a more inclusive model. Bellah researched the origins of American civil religion in the American Puritan tradition, thus including the model of Protestant civic piety as typical of early American civil religion. Transcendent universal civil religion also contains the option for the expression of common faith, folk religion, and religious nationalism. Through the image of the broken covenant, Bellah (1975) symbolized the self-transcendent application of American civil values. The productivity and inclusiveness of Bellah's model of American civil religion recommend it as the point of orientation for future research. A concise statement of Bellah's concept of American civil religion is adapted from the work of John A. Coleman (1970). Stated in this volume as Proposition I, American civil religion is viewed as "the religious symbol system which relates the citizen's role and American society's place in space, time, and history to the conditions of ultimate existence and meaning." This definition has the advantage of including reference to both the individual and societal levels of analysis and has the potential to guide sociological research more specifically than have previous definitions derived from philosophical, historical, or early sociological traditions.

Sociological research on American civil religion has been primarily concerned with the functions performed by civil religious systems and their relationship to other
social systems. Coleman (1970) hypothesized that American civil religion is structurally differentiated from both the political community and the religious community (Proposition II). Parsons's (1971) definition of differentiation, in conjunction with Bellah's (1964) theory of religious differentiation, represents the general theoretical framework from which Coleman's structural differentiation hypothesis is derived. Empirical studies concerning the location of indicators of American civil religion in other social institutions (e.g., Cole and Hammond, 1974; Mueller and Sites, 1976) have provided data in support of Proposition II. The greatest empirical support for the structural differentiation of American civil religion from religious and political communities is found in Wimberly's (Wimberly et al., 1976; Wimberly, 1976) empirical studies of individual civil religious belief. Wimberly finds American civil religion to be a separate, measurable, individual belief dimension which overlaps only minimally with other religious and political beliefs. The limited amount of empirical evidence gathered to date suggests that the values of American civil religion are congruent with the values of American religious and political institutions, although American civil religion is structurally differentiating from these institutions. The relationship of American civil religion to other American institutions is more problematic. Historical and theoretical studies must be relied upon for the most part, with the exceptions of Jolicoeur and Knowles's (1978) study of American civil religion in a
voluntary association and Thomas and Flippen's (1972) analysis of American civil religion in the American press. There is, therefore, as yet little evidence to support the logical hypothesis that most American institutions are in the process of differentiation from both traditional religion and civil religion. The institutions likely to be least differentiated from American civil religion are the traditionally integrative institutions such as the family, the schools, and religio-civic voluntary associations. Instrumental institutions, such as the economy and communications media, might be expected to exhibit the greatest degree of differentiation from American civil religion. However, much more research on American belief systems and their location within various American institutions is necessary before the structural differentiation of American civil religion can be confirmed or disconfirmed.

There are conflicting data concerning the functions of American civil religion. Demerath and Hammond (1967), Cherry (1970), Coleman (1970), and Bellah (1967; 1975) find American civil religion to be an institutional source of social integration, while Fenn (1976) doubts this. Bellah and Cherry note American civil religion's dual function for social integration and division but fail to fully specify the conditions under which American civil religion is either integrative or divisive. Bellah also notes the power of American civil religion to legitimate other American institutions. He believes that the legitimating power of American civil religious
values has eroded but affirms the possibility of renewal. In Bellah's view, the myths and symbols of American civil religion are still sufficiently powerful to aid the interpretation and legitimation of American social experience. Jolicoeur and Knowles's (1978) empirical study of the civil religious values still cherished by Masonic fraternal orders supports Bellah's position. Fenn (1972), taking the position of religious privatism, theorizes that no religiously based system of cultural legitimation, including civil religion, exists for contemporary America. Stauffer (1973) agrees with Fenn on the growth of the private sphere of religion but argues that some mechanism of cultural legitimation must operate in even the most rational, differentiated society. Stauffer finds Bellah's concept of American civil religion to be a useful model of a modern legitimating system.

Research on the prophetic function of American civil religion also yields conflicting conclusions. Bellah's model of transcendent, universal, American civil religion contains a potential for prophetic judgement. Bellah's data on civil religious prophecy are primarily historical, as are the supporting data of historian Mead (1967). Empirical research by Wimberly (1976) lends support to Bellah's model in the measurement of a transcendent civil religious dimension of personal belief. Critical response to the prophetic function of American civil religion comes from folk religionists Marty (1959) and Herberg (1960) and the empirical study of Thomas and Flippen (1972). There is not yet sufficient
evidence to confirm or disconfirm Proposition III, which states that American civil religion "performs specialized religious functions performed neither by church nor state." Yet the functional differentiation hypothesis is promising. Even those in opposition to the hypothesis would agree that, in a society characterized by church-state separation, neither religious nor political organizations exclusively sponsor social integration, cultural legitimization, and prophetic guidance. The field is open for other symbol systems such as a differentiated civil religion to assist with the performance of these functions. It is the task of the sociologists of contemporary American society to determine if American civil religion does in fact play a role in the integration, legitimation, and prophetic direction of the society.

If subsequent research confirms that American civil religion is differentiating from religious, political, and other institutions and performing increasingly specialized functions as the religious dimension of the polity, such confirmation will be congruent with the predictions of the major sociological theories of religious evolution. The theories of religious evolution of Weber (1948), Wach (1944), Bellah (1964), Durkheim (1965), and Parsons (1971) each predict increased differentiation of religious symbol systems due to modernization. Following the assumptions of these evolutionary theories, Coleman (1970) predicts the evolution of different forms of civil religion, based on the level of differentiation and degree of religious pluralism. Adapting
Coleman's theory to the specific case of American civil religion, Proposition IV states that the differentiation of American civil religion from political and religious communities follows the general direction of cultural evolution. American civil religion may be an expected manifestation of predictable cultural patterns. Currently there is little empirical evidence which relates directly to Proposition IV. The best cross-cultural examination of civil religious development is presented by Cole and Hammond (1974). Their data suggest that religious pluralism and high levels of societal and legal complexity are the specific conditions associated with the development of civil religious systems. The United States is the society in which these conditions are manifest to the highest degree and is therefore the society in which differentiated civil religion would be expected to develop. Additional cross-cultural research, expanding the Cole and Hammond study, would be necessary before any conclusions concerning evolutionary patterns of civil religious development could be made. The present analysis has been forced to rely on more easily obtainable historical and symbolic studies of civil religion in other societies. Coleman's ideal types of modern civil religious evolution are illustrated by Holtom's (1947) and Bellah's (1957) studies of state-sponsored civil religion in Japan, Shils and Young's (1953) symbolic analysis of church-sponsored civil religion in Great Britain, and Zeldin's (1969) and McDowell's (1974) research on secular nationalism in the U.S.S.R. These selected cases are only
illustrative of modern civil religious development but will hopefully pave the way for more comprehensive and systematic cross-cultural comparisons.

The present study summarizes the civil religion literature from several perspectives. Compiling and ordering the existing body of literature facilitates the task of determining future research directions. Today, conceptual debate still characterizes American civil religion theory, hindering the development of precise measurement instruments. Theoretical problems could be reduced by accepting Coleman's (1970) definition of American civil religion as the religious dimension of the American polity and by adopting the conceptual framework advanced in Propositions I through IV as the basis for future research. Empirical problems remain. The sociologist of American civil religion is confronted with the task of locating empirical indicators of a generalized cultural symbol system. Thus far, most civil religion research has been conducted through content analyses (e.g., Bellah, 1967; Thomas and Flippen, 1972; Mueller and Sites, 1977; Jolicoeur and Knowles, 1978) and symbolic studies (e.g., Shils and Young, 1953; Warner, 1961; Zeldin, 1969; McDowell, 1974). Continued research of both types will aid the location and classification of civil religion symbols within American institutions. Subjects such as the local celebrations of national holidays are particularly rich data sources for symbolic analysis. Symbolic case studies, however, are limited to the descriptive level of civil religious research, while
content analyses can be designed to yield explanatory data. The early content analyses, such as Bellah's 1967 analysis of presidential inaugural addresses, lack the precise measurement instruments and sampling techniques of later studies (e.g., Thomas and Flippen, 1972; Jolicoeur and Knowles, 1978). Unfortunately, reliance upon widely differing measurement instruments has limited the comparability of the recent studies. In two different studies (Thomas and Flippen, 1972; Jolicoeur and Knowles, 1978), the same item was coded as "secular" by one set of researchers and as "civil religious" by the other! A valid and reliable instrument for the identification of American civil religious content is thus needed. Once such a coding guide is developed, it could be fruitfully applied to the following content areas: United States Supreme Court decisions, United States presidential inaugural addresses, political election speeches, sermons, official journals of religious organizations and religio-civic voluntary associations, commencement addresses, mass advertising contents, and mass communication media coverage of national holidays and times of national celebration and mourning.

The most promising model for future civil religious research at the level of individual belief is Wimberly's (Wimberly et al., 1976) scale of American civil religious belief items. Wimberly's items (see Appendix) demonstrated ability to discriminate among other items of religious belief and political attitudes when administered to selected and random samples of Americans. Wimberly's civil religion items
also have high face validity as a measurement of Bellah's transcendent universal American civil religion and score high on indicators of reliability. Wimberly (1976:349-350) concluded that his research "extends support for the civil religion hypothesis" and advances American civil religion to "the status of a social scientific concept." Continued application of Wimberly's American civil religion scale to additional samples and the continued refinement of his measurement items should advance the field of empirical knowledge concerning individually held civil religious belief.

The best empirical test of Propositions I through IV will probably not come from traditional modes of civil religion research in American sociology. Individual belief studies such as Wimberly's produce data which can only be applied at the individual level of analysis. Individual belief data are directly applicable only to Proposition I, which states that American civil religion is the religious symbol system which relates the citizen's role and American society's place in space, time, and history to the conditions of ultimate meaning. Although Wimberly's individual belief studies have been cited in this analysis in support of Proposition II, concerning the structural differentiation of American civil religion, this generalization from the level of individual belief to that of social structure is tenuous. Symbolic studies and content analysis have been limited to the context of one society and have failed to generate the comparative material necessary to test Proposition IV, which
concerns the cultural evolution of civil religious systems. If the entire proposition set is to be adequately tested, a modern, empirical version of Weberian socio-historical comparison is called for. Cole and Hammond (1974) have made the greatest contribution to this type of research effort in their cross-cultural institutional comparison of world societies. Additional cross-cultural data on civil religious systems need to be gathered to add to the data on societal complexity and legal and religious systems compiled by Cole and Hammond. It is expected that, if cross-cultural data on civil religion are made available, they will generally confirm Proposition IV. It is also expected that the data will reveal that cultural evolution and concomitant civil religious evolution are more complex than Proposition IV predicts. For example, in many societies, civil religion will be in the process of differentiating from religious or political domination and will not fit neatly into any of Coleman's ideal types of modern civil religion. Propositions II through IV and Coleman's types of civil religion are based on the possible variation of only one variable known to be operant in the process of evolution: differentiation. Inclusion of other variables associated with evolution, such as adaptive upgrading, inclusion, and value generalization (Parsons, 1971) would add complexity to the research effort but would also generate more comprehensive information concerning the patterns of civil religious development. It is the conclusion of the present analysis that the study of American civil religion can best
be advanced by expanding research beyond the boundaries of a single societal case. Cross-cultural research is critical to the compilation of a comprehensive explanation of civil religious development. Cross-cultural research is also necessary for the prediction of the emergence of new civil religious systems and for the prediction of the continuation or decline of the American system of civil religion.

This study has been dedicated to the purpose of conceptual clarification and theoretical codification and has been conducted as a necessary first step before actual empirical research on American civil religion can be done. It is the conclusion of this analysis that American civil religion is a viable sociological concept, deserving of and fruitful for continued scientific inquiry. Several directions for continuing research have been elaborated with the hope and expectation that the information presented here will provide answers to some of the specific questions of the contemporary sociology of American civil religion.
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APPENDIX
APPENDIX


Civil Religion
1. We should respect the president's authority since his authority is from God.
2. National leaders should not only affirm their belief in God but also their belief in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
3. Good Christians aren't necessarily good patriots.
4. God can be known through the experience of the American people.
5. The founding fathers created a blessed and unique republic when they gave us the Constitution.
6. If the American government does not support religion, it cannot uphold morality.
7. It is a mistake to think that America is God's chosen nation today.
8. To me, the flag of the United States is sacred.

All items were scored on a 5-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."
The dissertation submitted by Gail Gehrig has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Robert J. McNamara, Director
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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date

NOV 30, 1979

Director's Signature