Secularization on Trial: In Defense of a Neosecularization Paradigm

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According to its critics, the "old" secularization paradigm has been tried, convicted, and executed by recent scholarship in the social sciences of religion, and is being replaced by a "new" (postsecularization) paradigm which highlights the continued vitality of religion in modern societies. This paper argues that claims to have definitively refuted secularization theory are exaggerated. It mounts a defense of a *neosecularization* paradigm which retains the core insights of the old paradigm while incorporating criticisms leveled against the hubris and laziness of some deployments of the concept of "secularization." Following Chaves (1994), this paper argues that the core of neosecularization theory is the proposition that secularization means not the decline of religion but the declining scope of religious authority at the individual, organizational, and societal levels of analysis. Three exemplars of this perspective in the area of religion and politics are highlighted: the work of Hertzke (1988), Demerath and Williams (1992), and Casanova (1994).

Should we not learn to give less importance to personal rivalries, to grandiose-sounding but shallow statements of intentions, and concentrate instead on the job of revising the paradigm that is effectively available in the light of contemporary evidence?

(Tschannen 1991)

In a recent paper, Lechner notes that "secularization used to be part of the conventional sociological wisdom" but of late "has come under attack" and "has become suspect in the eyes of sociologists" (1991: 1103). In response to this attack, Lechner (1991: 1104) "critically examine[s] the case against secularization" and offers "a rebuttal, a brief for the defense." He argues that the case is not as forceful as the prosecution claims, and concludes that any conviction is premature. Unfortunately, in the court of Star Chamber, which has tried secularization theory (Demerath 1995: 110), Lechner's defense received no serious consideration by the prosecution. To the contrary, the prosecution has only grown more intense, as Stark and his co-authors continue to conjure up damning evidence (e.g., Finke & Stark 1992). Warner has stepped in to act as judge, jury, and executioner, and even wrote an obituary for the deceased "old" paradigm (Warner 1993).

It must be said, however, that reports of the death of secularization theory have been greatly exaggerated. (A point already made by Lechner, which has apparently fallen on ears deafened by the celebration of secularization's defeat.) Defenders of secularization have begun to respond to the charges brought against it, and the recent recognition of Casanova's (1994) masterful defense by the 1995 SSSR book-award committee provides the occasion for the writing of this brief on behalf of secularization theory. After briefly reviewing the prosecution's case, I offer a rebuttal of the charges against secularization theory. I then argue for an alternative to the "old" and "new" paradigms, one which retains the core insights of the "old" view and incorporates the legitimate criticisms of the "new" view, thereby transcending

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the apparent antimonies of the two paradigms. I conclude by highlighting three exemplars of a neosecularization perspective in the area of religion and politics.

SECULARIZATION ON TRIAL

The defendant in this case is a theoretical tradition in the social scientific study of religion which centers on the concept of "secularization," a tradition which critics have recently dubbed the "old" paradigm (Warner 1993). This view has historically dominated research on religion in society. While this is neither the time nor the place for a comprehensive review of the "old" paradigm, a few words can be said about its broad outlines.

Like the past masters Durkheim and Weber, sophisticated contemporary secularization theorists — like those named by Tschannen (1991): Bellah, Berger, Fenn, Martin, Luckmann, Parsons, and Wilson — all stress the *transformation* of religion in the modern world. The "old" paradigm holds that over time the place of religion in the social order, the structure of religious organizations, and the orientation of individuals to religion all *change*. The primary direction of this change, according to a leading contemporary scholar working within this tradition is toward "the diminution in the social significance of . . . religious institutions, actions, and consciousness" (Wilson 1982: 149). It is only in this *qualified* sense that major secularization theorists have discussed the *decline* of religion; it has never meant the "extinction" of religion, as Stark et al. are fond of claiming (esp. Stark & Iannaccone 1992).[1] Indeed, according to Tschannen (1991: 402), the secularization paradigm stands under the assumption that religion will never completely disappear. This view of secularization is what Wilson (1985) calls "the inherited model" (for the benchmark analysis of the secularization paradigm, see Tschannen 1991, 1992).

Tschannen has recently argued that this "inherited model" actually constitutes a paradigm, in the *strict* Kuhnian sense of being grounded in a concrete scientific community which shares a core set of concepts, an infrastructure of "exemplars," even if there is diversity at the theoretical level within the paradigm.[2] Ironically, at the very moment Tschannen codified the secularization paradigm, the prosecution of this paradigm by advocates of a "new" postsecularization paradigm was reaching a fevered pitch.

THE "NEW" PARADIGM: PROSECUTING THE SECULARIZATION THESIS

In recent years, several sociologists of religion have challenged the reality of "secularization." This challenge, like paradigm shifts generally, is driven by an accumulation of apparently anomalous data (Warner 1993), or what Stark and Iannaccone (1992: 2030) have called "a mountain of obstinate facts." While Warner (1996) claims that grappling with these obstinate facts within the confines of the old paradigm is like "Copernicus grappling with Ptolemy," I call them *apparently* anomalous to highlight the fact that from the neosecularization perspective which will be elaborated below, most of these data are either irrelevant to or interpretable within the terms of the theory.

Prosecution Evidence: Apparently Anomalous Data

These apparently anomalous data introduced into evidence in the prosecution of secularization theory include: the flowering of "New Religious Movements" in the 1960s and 1970s; the spread of Pentecostal, Neo-Pentecostal, and Charismatic Movements since the 1960s; the restructuring of "American Mainline Religion" driven by the rapid growth of conservative Protestant churches; and the involvement of conservative Evangelicals and Fundamentalists in politics, notably the Moral Majority and the "New Christian Right" generally. The persistence of religion in various forms and fora are highlighted in the collec-

tions of Hammond (1985) and Robbins and Anthony (1990). Surveys of nationally representative samples of Americans also reveal a remarkable persistence of religious belief and practices, as Greeley (1989) has meticulously documented.

The most celebrated testimony against secularization theory has been offered by those who embrace a rational choice to religion, and in particular the "religious economies" model. According to this model, a religious economy consists of all the religious activity going on in any society. Religious economies are like commercial economies in that they consist of a market of current and potential customers, a set of firms seeking to serve that market, and religious "product lines" offered by various firms (Stark 1985; Stark & Bainbridge 1985, 1987). Also like commercial economies, religious economies thrive when they are allowed to operate without government interference. Finke (1990) summarizes the logic of the model: Deregulation leads to pluralism, pluralism to competition, competition to specialization of product (catering to a market niche) and aggressive recruitment, specialization and recruitment to higher demand, and higher demand to greater participation. Thus, as a "natural" consequence of the invisible hand operating unencumbered by state regulation, "over time the diversity of the religious market will reflect the very diversity of the population itself" (Finke 1990: 622).

This basic model has been applied in several different studies, some of which take the unit of analysis for comparison to be the nation-state and some of which use intranational units of analysis such as cities, counties, or dioceses (see Stark's [1994] summary). In the breakthrough article for the economics of religion, Finke and Stark (1988) found support for one hypothesis derived from the religious economies model, namely that "religious pluralism" is positively related to "religious mobilization." While Finke and Stark (1988) and others find empirical support for the religious economies perspective, their data are cross-sectional and do not give any evidence for a trend over time. Thus, the empirical jewel in the religious economies crown is the longitudinal data in the 1993 SSSR award-winning book, *The Churching of America*. In it, Finke and Stark (1992) argue that between 1776 and 1990, religious "adherence" in the United States grew from 17% to 60%, and that this linear, upward slope is exactly the opposite of what is predicted by secularization theory.

The Verdict: Guilty in the First Degree

Many have taken these empirical observations to be sufficient evidence for the abandonment of secularization theory. Hadden (1987), for example, argues that there is little empirical evidence up through the 1980s that would support the secularization hypothesis. Secularization theory, according to Hadden, is a myth that sociologists have sacralized; it is a received doctrine and not an empirical fact. Swatos (1993: x) has argued similarly that "'secularization' is primarily a concept for the sociology of knowledge, and only secondarily for the sociology of religion." Most recently, Stark (1996) has claimed that "macro-level theorizing about religious economies . . . forces the conclusion that the so-called secularization thesis is simply wrong," and Stark and Iannaccone (1994: 231) have proposed "dropping the term *secularization* from all theoretical discourse."[3]

Most notable in the reaction to the old paradigm is an SSSR award-winning article in which Warner (1993) champions an emergent "new," postsecularization paradigm. According to Warner (1993: 1048), "that the reigning theory does not seem to work has become an open secret." The "old" paradigm has produced "inconclusive results" and therefore is currently giving way to a new approach, which centers on the unique history of the United States. Warner (1996) has since encouraged "fencesitters" between the two paradigms to join the new approach "and abandon our bankrupt competitors."

Warner's proclamation notwithstanding, the new paradigm — especially the central component which is founded on rational choice theory — has yet to prove itself either

theoretically sound or empirically valid across a variety of substantive domains. While this perspective has facilitated some impressive empirical findings, it remains to be seen whether it will be able to reach anywhere near the status of a true *paradigm* in Kuhn's (1970) original sense.[4]

Although these criticisms of the old paradigm are useful correctives to the overstated claims of some scholars who flew under the conceptual banner of "secularization," as Demerath (1994: 106) has recently remarked, "in the pendulous worlds of both religion and religious scholarship, corrections often over-reach themselves." Chaves (1994: 750) concurs, noting that "currently fashionable claims suggesting that secularization theory has been decisively falsified throw the baby out with the bathwater." The insights provided by the new paradigm do not force us to abandon the *idea* of secularization that has provided sustained insights for cautious sociologists of religion for the past century. As a result of the postsecularization challenge, secularization theorists have an opportunity to formulate a *neosecularization* paradigm which reaches back to earlier understandings of secularization and retains what was essential to those conceptualizations while jettisoning peripheral concerns and unsustainable claims. Some have begun to do this already, and the following sections seek to organize and advertise that work.

SECULARIZATION THEORY: A DEFENSE

The idea that bringing contrary evidence to bear on theory is sufficient to cause its downfall is the heart of positivist philosophies of science. Not surprisingly given his claim to have definitively refuted secularization theory, Stark (1996) embraces the positivist vision articulated by Popper, noting that prior to beginning graduate school, "I read everyone important" in the philosophy of science, "but no one influenced me more than did Karl Popper." Popper instructed Stark "that theories should begin with abstract, general statements, or axioms, from which a set of propositions could be derived and that one tested such theories by testing empirical predictions derived from the propositions," and further, that "a real theory must predict and prohibit certain observations, that some outcomes must be incompatible with the theory." If observations did not fit the predictions, a deductively derived proposition was "refuted." This is Popper's (1963) well-known "conjectures and refutations" or falsificationist model of science.

The postpositivist philosophy of science, particularly as articulated by Kuhn (1970) and Lakatos (1978), has challenged this view by suggesting the ways in which theories are resilient to empirical challenges. As Alexander (1990: 10) has summarized it: "Theories differentiate between core notions, which are positions considered essential to the theory's identity, and others that are more peripheral. Faced with studies that throw some of their important commitments into doubt, general theories can sustain their vivacity by discarding peripherals and defending their core." In other words, when paradigms are attacked, they engage in what Lakatos (1978) calls a "negative heuristic." That is, they circle the wagons around a core of ideas.

This is what people who still think secularization is an essential concept for sociology have been doing lately in response to the challenges they have faced from postsecularization theorists. Thus, the recent spate of criticisms of the old paradigm has had the useful consequence of forcing secularization theorists to self-consciously reevaluate the paradigm which for so long was part of the taken-for-granted background of sociological thinking. Hadden's criticism that secularization is not so much a theory as a hodgepodge of loosely related ideas and concepts is in some ways accurate. "Secularization" has come to mean so many different things to so many different people that is has in certain respects become meaningless. Thus, scholars interested in retaining the concept of secularization for sociology have been forced to rethink and reelaborate the old paradigm, to formulate a neosecularization paradigm

which retains and refines the core of ideas developed by the past masters while leaving behind peripheral ideas which have attached themselves without any particular benefit.

FLAWS IN THE "NEW" PARADIGM CRITIQUE OF SECULARIZATION

Before elaborating a neosecularization perspective, I first offer rebuttals of two flawed criticisms of secularization theory made by adherents of the new paradigm. First, postsecularization theorists misrepresent secularization theory by claiming it advances the idea that religion will decline in modern society, when in fact the core architects the paradigm have always theorized not the decline or disappearance of religion but its transformation. Second, the data cited by postsecularization critics as anomalous are exclusively individual- and organizational-level. There is no serious consideration of secularization at the *societal* level. If we look at who postsecularization prosecutors allowed to speak in defense of the secularization paradigm during its trial, we can begin to see why. Table 1 illustrates the narrow understanding which is presented in postsecularization critiques.

Rebuttal #1: Transformation not "Decline" of Religion

In attacking the old paradigm, new paradigm advocates unjustly simplify secularization theory. The most notable example of this is the claim that secularization theory centers on the idea that religion will decline in modern society. For example, Swatos (1993: ix–x) writes:

> In his recent historical analysis of the sociology of religion from its inception in the heyday of industrial society to the present . . . Beckford observes that although it is true that 'religion' constituted an important category for practically all of the sociological forebears — Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Tocqueville, Comte, Simmel, Spencer, Martineau, the American founders, and on and on — religion was also mainly conceived negatively: The *decline* of religion was, for these sociologists, to be certainly observed, possibly lamented, possibly celebrated.

Hadden (1987: 587) offers a similarly inaccurate representation of secularization theory when he claims: "Few forecasts have been uttered with more unshakable confidence than sociology's belief that religion is in the midst if its final death throes." Similarly, Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 1–2) vigorously and at times mockingly[5] argue against secularization as the decline of religion without citing any particular authors or works as representing this supposedly dominant view of secularization. Finke and Stark (1988) and Stark and Iannaccone (1992) both paint equally reductionistic portraits of the "secularization thesis," drawing mostly on the views of anthropologist Anthony F. C. Wallace, while giving a nod to but one of the other better known secularization theorists named by Tschannen. Stark (1994) cites *none* in his gross caricature of secularization theory (see Table 1).

The naive view of "secularization" as the decline of religion has been criticized extensively, and justly so, even by secularization theorists. For example, almost 30 years ago, Bellah (1970: 237) criticized what he called the "Enlightenment myth of secularization," a see-saw model in which as science ascended, religion descended. It is true that the past 30 years have provided considerable evidence to refute any naive view of secularization, but mature views of secularization never held that it meant the decline of religion. As Wilson (1982: 149–50) clearly states in defining secularization as the decline in *social significance* of religion: "What such a definition does *not* imply is that all men have acquired a secularized consciousness. It does not even suggest that most individuals have relinquished all their interest in religion." Secularization theorists Bellah and Luckmann, in fact, have been criticized for adopting functional definitions of religion which does not allow for its disappearance under any circumstances (Chaves 1991).

TABLE 1

"OLD" SECULARIZATION PARADIGM THEORISTS CITED BY "NEW" PARADIGM SCHOLARS

"Old" Paradigm Theorists	"New" Paradigm Critics of Secularization						
	Hadden (1987)	Finke & Stark (1988)	Stark & Iannaccone (1992)	Stark & McCann (1993)	Warner (1993)	Stark (1994)	Stark & Iannaccone (1994)
Robert Bellah (1964, 1967)							X
Peter Berger (1967, 1979)		X		X	X		
Richard Fenn (1970, 1978)							
Thomas Luckmann (1967, 1991)					X		
David Martin (1969, 1978)	X						X
Talcott Parsons (1963, 1964, 1966)	X				X		
Bryan Wilson (1966, 1976, 1982)			X	X			X

Note: Representatives of the "Old" Paradigm were taken from Tschannen's (1991, 1992) Kuhnian analysis and systematization of the secularization paradigm, which contains citations for all the "Old" Paradigm works in this table.

To be sure, the new paradigm which Stark, Warner et al. are heralding has brought many insights to issues of concern to all students of religion. I have learned much from them and hope they continue to enlighten the field; but these insights *do not speak to the issue of secularization*. A neosecularization paradigm in the sociology of religion will hopefully render this point unambiguous.

Rebuttal #2: Levels of Analysis

The second major flaw in the new paradigm critique of secularization theory is that the data cited by postsecularization theorists as anomalous do not examine secularization at the *societal level*, when it is precisely the macrosocial significance of religion which most concerned scholars of the old paradigm (Tschannen 1991, 1992; Chaves 1991).[6] Chaves (1994) — following Dobbelaere (1981) — highlights the fact that secularization is a *multidimensional* concept, and reasserts the importance of societal-level secularization.

The neosecularization paradigm emphasizes the centrality of institutional differentiation at the societal level. Data about individual beliefs, practices, and devotions do not discount the differentiation of religion from other institutions such as the economy, the state, education, and the family. According to Tschannen (1991: 403), while "the paradigm is not completely represented in any one of the theories" of its carriers, "its core element — *differentiation* — is shared by them all." Neosecularization theorist Casanova (1994: 18) has gone so far as to say "the theory of secularization is nothing more than a subtheory of general theories of differentiation." This is taking the point a bit too far since it excludes secularization at the individual and organizational levels, but it does correctly assert the predominance of institutional differentiation on the societal level in the neosecularization perspective.

FOR A NEOSECULARIZATION PARADIGM: SECULARIZATION AS DECLINING RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

The key contribution to the specification of a neosecularization theory is made by Chaves 1994). Noting that previous debates around secularization tended to get mired in definitional issues, Chaves redirects attention by arguing that secularization "is best understood not as the decline of religion, but as the declining scope of religious authority" (1994: 750), and more specifically, the declining sphere of influence of *religious authority structures*. Here "religious authority structure" is defined, following Weber, as "a social structure that attempts to enforce its order and its reach its ends by controlling the access of individuals to some desired good, where the legitimation of that control includes some supernatural component, however weak" (1994: 755–56). What truly distinguishes religious from other authority structures, therefore, is "that their claims are legitimated at least by a *language* of the supernatural" (1994: 756).

Secularization as the declining scope of religious authority needs to be viewed on three levels. Secularization occurs when religious authority structures decline in their ability to control societal-level institutions, meso-level organizations, and individual-level beliefs and behaviors. Chaves (1994: 757) summarizes his argument:

> Secularization at the societal level may be understood as the declining capacity of religious elites to exercise authority over other institutional spheres. Secularization at the organizational level may be understood as religious authority's declining control over organizational resources within the religious sphere. And secularization at the individual level may be understood as the decrease in the extent to which individual actions are subject to religious control.

In what follows I will highlight the usefulness of this reorientation of secularization theory, looking in turn at the individual and societal levels (see Chaves 1991, 1993a, 1993b for a consideration of the organization level).

REEXAMINING INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL PHENOMENA

The apparently anomalous data noted above as a critique of secularization theory can now be reexamined in light of the neosecularization perspective just discussed. Neosecularization theory suggests that while the *quantities* of individual religious beliefs and behaviors may be high, as in the United States, these are not the relevant data. What needs to be assessed is the orientation people have to religious authority structures. A secularized society is one in which people will feel free to believe and act in ways which differ from or even go against the prescribed views of religious authorities. People's views and behaviors will be characterized by autonomy and choice.[7]

There isn't much data that speaks directly to secularization in this sense. One bit of useful longitudinal data comes from the "Middletown" studies. Stark and colleagues often cite evidence from Middletown as disconfirming secularization theory. For example, Finke and Stark (1988: 47) note that "in 1931 there was one church for every 763 residences of Muncie, Indiana (sociology's famous Middletown). By 1970 there was one church for every 473 residents — a pattern of growth that applies across the nation" (cited also in Stark & Iannaccone 1992: 2030). Stark et al. fail to consider other findings from the Middletown studies, however, which suggests that individual-level secularization *is* occurring alongside the stability and growth seen in the data presented above. To wit, between 1924 and 1977 there has been drastic declines in the percentage of high school seniors in Middletown who agree with statements such as the following: "The Bible is a sufficient guide to all problems of modern life" (21% fewer agree); "Christianity is the one true religion and all people should be converted" (53% fewer); and "It is wrong to attend movies on Sunday" (25% fewer) (Caplow et al. 1983). A distinction Geertz (1968) makes helps to get a handle on these data and understand how they relate to the neosecularization view. Geertz distinguishes between the force and scope of religious beliefs, where by *force* he simply means how strongly persons hold their beliefs, and by *scope* he means the breadth of the applicability of those beliefs. The Middletown data reveal a *truncation* of the applicability of religious beliefs beyond the narrowly religious sphere which is indicative of a decline in the scope of religious authority.

The quantitative data on religious beliefs and practices presented above as evidence against secularization, therefore, do not tap a more *qualitative* change in the *way* people believe and the *way* they practice religion. For example, none of Greeley's (1989) poll data get at the orientation toward religion which Hammond (1992) and Bellah et al. (1985) call "expressive individualist," in which organized religion is seen simply as a degraded form of "spirituality." This dominant trend carried to its logical conclusion suggests that secularization on the individual level results in totally privatized religion. This trend is exemplified by Sheila Larson, a pseudonymous American who named a religion after herself: "I believe in God. I'm not a religious fanatic. I can't remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It's Sheilaism" (quoted in Bellah et al. 1985: 221). More recently, supermodel Cindy Crawford has given an even more succinct statement of religious privatism: "I'm religious but in my own personal way. I always say that I have a Cindy Crawford religion — it's my own" (*Redbook,* September 1992).

These privatized views of religion are not limited to Sheilaism and Cindyism. The extent of this secularization is captured in the findings that over three-quarters of Americans maintain that a person should come to their moral views independent of any church or synagogue (Bellah et al. 1985; Greer & Roof 1992). Further examples of this

decline in the scope of religious authority on the individual level can be found in recent work by Hammond (1992), Roof (1993), and McNamara (1992).

EXPLORING SOCIETAL-LEVEL PHENOMENA

More important than the individual level, however, is that neosecularization theory draws attention back to a foundational insight in sociology: that the development of modern society is distinguished by institutional differentiation.[8] The essential feature of this view is that in the course of modernization "specialized roles and institutions develop or arise to handle specific features or functions previously embodied in, or carried out by, one role or institution" (Wallis & Bruce 1991: 4). While retaining this insight, "new" differentiation theory (Alexander 1990) also sees "the political, conflictual, and contingent nature of relations among societal institutions in general and between religion and others spheres in particular" (Chaves 1994: 751). There is no claim made "that the process [of institutional differentiation] proceeds unimpeded, that all dimensions . . . proceed at the same pace, or that there cannot be reversals" (Wallis & Bruce 1991: 5). As Chaves (1994: 752) notes, unlike previous understandings of secularization-as-differentiation "in which other societal spheres [like the state or science] are theorized to increasingly dominate social life at the expense of religion, new differentiation theory leaves this open to investigation." The extent to which religion is stripped of its ability to influence institutions such as the state truly becomes a variable (Chaves 1994: 765), in this view, an object of investigation which must be explained in concrete historical and institutional contexts.

As I demonstrate in the next section, this type of study is precisely what some scholars, who can be identified as working within the neosecularization paradigm, are doing. I will consider as exemplars work on the relationship between religion and politics by Hertzke (1988), Demerath and Williams (1992), and Casanova (1994).

Three Exemplars of the Neosecularization Paradigm: Studying Religion and Politics

Representing a new paradigm view of the relationship between religion and politics in contemporary society, Johnson (1985: 301) argues, "it is clear that [the] broad picture of the retreating influence of religion in America is seriously distorted. There have been too many surprising developments and too much empirical research providing contradictory data for any responsible social scientists to claim that religion has no influence on public affairs in the United States or that it has retired quietly to the sidelines of social life." Today we see the Christian Coalition; in 1992 it was Pat Buchanan running for President; in 1988 it was Pat Robertson running for President; in 1980 and 1984 it was the Reagan Revolution supported by Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority; in 1976 it was the born-again Jimmy Carter winning the presidency.

As Dobbelaere (1989: 38f) argues, however, what is important about understanding the role of religion in politics is not the mere presence of religious voices but "their impact on the enactment and application of laws." We need to investigate the effectiveness of religious legitimations in political settings: whether the scope of religious authority extends to encompass decision making in political institutions. Most research into the relationship between religion and politics does not do this. I briefly touch on three studies which do and are therefore suggestive for future studies in the developing neosecularization tradition.

1. In *Representing God in Washington* (1988), Hertzke provides one of the few studies to date of religious lobbies in Washington, D.C. He notes that in 1950 there were 16 major religious lobbies in D.C., and by 1985, there were at least 80 (Hertzke 1988: 5). Some will surely take the expansion of religious lobbying as prima facie evidence against secularization. But neosecularization theory is concerned less with the mere existence of these

groups than with the extent to which their religious legitimations are authoritative in the political sphere.

Hertzke notes one major case in which religious lobbies were effective in realizing their goal: the Equal Access Act of 1984. But even this success does not clearly contradict the secularization thesis. In lobbying for this act, fundamentalist groups came to "embrace the language of rights," which "is more appealing than the language of moral imperatives" in the congressional context (1988: 196). As a Moral Majority lobbyist told Hertzke: "We can't afford to say 'God settled it, that's it' " (1988: 196). The Moral Majority learned from the success of "rights talk" over "God talk" in the Equal Access Act, and would attempt to apply it to other issues in which they were involved. Speaking of the abortion issue in particular, Jerry Falwell has said, "We are reframing the debate. This is no longer a religious issue, but a civil rights issue" (1988: 196). The congressional milieu shapes and constrains religious groups which seek to influence Congress. Religious rhetoric "inevitably seems to give way to lobby strategies aimed at change on the margins" (Hertzke 1988: 88).

Hertzke does point to the positive side of religious lobbying — in particular that it expands representation — but beyond that the fact remains that in a secularized society, religious groups have no power to set the norms of political institutions which operate according to their own rationality because of institutional differentiation.

2. *A Bridging of Faiths: Religion and Politics in a New England City* (1992): Demerath and Williams also highlight the importance of differentiation between religious and political institutions *and* the variable relationship which exists between religion and politics in the U.S. today. In their words, "The cultural theme of the 'separation of church and state' and the institutional reality of a differentiated society mean that real distinctions are made between the religio-moral and political spheres. But these distinctions are to some extent problematic — a cultural construction to be negotiated" (Williams & Demerath 1991: 420).

Where religion is disestablished, religious groups lack the formal authority to make political decisions, and they also frequently lack the central "structural" resources (money, political networks) necessary to directly influence decision making. The reality of this aspect of secularization does not, however, mean that religious groups are invisible or impotent in the public life. Lacking structural resources, religious groups frequently deploy "cultural" resources to affect political outcomes. One of the most powerful cultural resources which many religious groups possess in the U.S. is the capacity to exercise moral authority to influence the decision-making by formal authorities (Demerath & Williams 1992b: 203). Demerath and Williams (1992a: 141–254) see this in three events in their community case study.

When Springfield officials dragged their feet in addressing the issue of homelessness in their city, "a heterogeneous group of religious activists made a critical difference in giving new urgency to the issue and forcing the city to develop a new public shelter" (Demerath & Williams 1992b: 199). When black neighborhood development became an issue in downtown Springfield, a small band of predominantly black Protestant ministers, calling itself the "Covenant," mobilized a variety of moral appeals to force some activity on the issue (Williams & Demerath 1991: 425–29). Finally, in controversies surrounding abortion and sex education, activist Catholics, Evangelical Protestants, and Orthodox Jews were successful in proscribing somewhat the liberalization of sexuality, especially in the high school health clinic, which was barred from mentioning either contraception or abortion to students (Demerath & Williams 1992b: 200).

Taken together, these three cases highlight the possibility that the declining scope of religious authority may bring a heightened influence in the spheres to which religious authority is restricted. Religious legitimations may remain, but are limited in the range of issues to which they may be applied. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that this constitutes secularization since "organized religion has become but one voice among many trying

to influence a bureaucratized government that has its own institutional agenda" (Demerath & Williams 1990: 428). The bottom line for Demerath and Williams is this: whatever political efficacy religion might have in contemporary society is *because* not *despite* secularization: "we maintain that *because* of the separation of religious organizations from the official polity, churches in U.S. society are perceived as the 'carriers of the moral' in the culture" (Williams & Demerath 1991: 419). This complexifies and strengthens the concept of secularization; it does not refute it.

3. *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994) begins with Casanova arguing that "the unassailable core of modern theories of secularization" is "the thesis of differentiation and emancipation of secular spheres from religious institutions and norms," and rejecting the idea that religion is destined to disappear in the course of modernization (1994: 40, 6). On these two points,. Casanova is reiterating the central themes of the sophisticated secularization theorists noted above.

Casanova's unique contribution is his argument about the *privatization* of religion in modern society. Like others, he sees the shift of religion from the public to the private sphere in the course of differentiation: "To say that in the modern world 'religion becomes private' refers also to the vary process of institutional differentiation which is constitutive of modernity, namely, to the modern historical process whereby the secular spheres emancipated themselves from ecclesiastical control as well as from religious norms. Religion was progressively forced to withdraw from the modern secular state and the modern capitalist economy and to find refuge in the newly found private sphere" (1994: 40). While some might be content to conclude with this observation, Casanova distinguishes himself by using it as a prelude to his main argument. Casanova's (1994: 39) central point is that, unlike institutional differentiation, which is a "structural trend that serves to define the very structure of modernity, the privatization of religion is an historical option, a 'preferred option' to be sure, but an option nonetheless." In recent years, many countries have seen the rise of "public religions" which refuse to exercise the historical option of privatization. Thus, in case studies of the changing role of the Catholic Church in Spain, Poland, Brazil, and the U.S., and the public mobilization of Protestant fundamentalists in the U.S., Casanova (1994: 5) finds that "we are witnessing the 'deprivatization' of religion in the modern world."

Like Demerath and Williams, Casanova argues that a broad pattern of secularization is a main condition of existence for the public involvement of religion. According to Casanova (1994: 56–57), "While disestablishment and separation are necessary to guarantee the freedom of religion from the state, the freedom of state from religion, and the freedom of the individual conscience from both state and organized religion, it does not follow that religion must be privatized in order that these freedoms be guaranteed." To the contrary, with the increasing penetration of the two major modern societal systems — the state and market — into the traditional lifeworld, the deprivatization of religion is necessary to defend the lifeworld against colonization and to "question and contest the claims of states and markets to function according to their own intrinsic functionalist norms without regard to extrinsic traditional moral norms" (Casanova 1994: 228–29).

The case of the American Catholic Bishops is instructive here. Adapting to the imperatives of modernity, the Catholic Church now embraces the constitutional separation of church and state and the principle of religious freedom, and makes no attempt to establish or sponsor political parties. This, however, does not mean that the Church is privatized; it "only means that the public locus of the church is no longer the state or political society but, rather, civil society " (Casanova 1994: 62–63). This is how the American Catholic Bishops' influential pastoral letters of the 1980s on nuclear war and the economy must be understood. Drawing on a neo–Habermasian framework, Casanova (1994: 188) contends that the episcopal speeches are "an empirical approximation of the institutionalization of discourse ethics at the general civil society level." Thus, the true success of the Bishops in their public

pronouncements was that they "challenged the claims of the differentiated political and economic sphere that they should be evaluated solely in terms of intrinsic, functionally rational criteria without regard to extraneous moral considerations." Just as Demerath and Williams see religious groups and traditions as sources of moral authority in a fundamentally secularized society, so too does Casanova see them as sources of "counterfactual normative critique" in a secularized society dominated by the logical imperatives of the state and economy and their primary media, power and money, respectively.

That this book won the 1995 SSSR Book Award suggests that perhaps the intellectual tide is turning back against the overstated claims of postsecularization theorists, and that a middle ground like the neosecularization approach enacted in Casanova's, Demerath and Williams's, and Hertzke's studies of religion and politics will make some headway in moving the field forward.

CONCLUSION

To counter Stark and Iannaccone's (1994) call to drop the concept "secularization," I am urging all scholars who want to retain "secularization" as a useful and meaningful analytical construct in social scientific studies of religion to stop using the term in any way except as I have suggested here. While this might seem draconian and limiting, engaging in this negative heuristic is essential to defend secularization theory against the misrepresentations and misunderstandings, the Star Chambers and kangaroo courts, which have become all too common in debates over the status of religion in modern society. In this paper I have tried to follow Tschannen's advice in the epigraph earlier: to give less importance to personal rivalries and grandiose-sounding but shallow statements of intentions, and concentrate instead on the job of revising the paradigm that is effectively available in the light of contemporary evidence. Now, let the *positive* heuristics continue.

NOTES

This paper grew out of a stimulating conversation with Wendy Young at the 1995 SSSR meetings in St. Louis. I gratefully acknowledge her input, as well as the advice and support of Mark Chaves, the late Richard Schoenherr, Teresa Scheid, the Sociology of Religion Collective and participants in the CHMP Brown Bag at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. I bear full responsibility for any shortcomings of the argument as presented.

[1] It is remarkable that Stark on more than one occasion has allowed the view of Anthony F. C. Wallace to stand for the entire secularization paradigm. For example, Stark and Iannaccone (1992: 2029) claim that "Wallace undoubtedly spoke for nearly all of his colleagues when he pronounced the impending doom of the world's religions."

[2] Although the argument is too complex to be neatly summarized here (but see Tschannen 1991, Figure 2), his codification highlights three core exemplars shared by secularization theorists: differentiation, rationalization and worldliness. Beyond this common core, more diversity is evident in the six second-order exemplars (autonomization, privatization, generalization, pluralization, collapse of the worldview, and scientization) and three marginal exemplars (decline in practice, unbelief, and sociologization) which can be found in the work of contemporary secularization theorists.

[3] Interestingly, they also argue that "what is needed is not a theory of the decline or decay of religion, but of religious *change*" (Stark & Iannaccone 1994: 231). I contend that, without exception, every major, sophisticated secularization theorist — from Durkheim to Dobbelaere — has maintained not that religion *declines* but that religion *changes* in the course of modernization. Indeed, *"transformation not decline"* should be the mantra of all neosecularization theorists.

[4] In my judgment, the concept "paradigm" has been badly misappropriated by social scientists. In part, this is a natural consequence of its difficulty as an idea; even Kuhn has acknowledged that "several of the key difficulties of my original text cluster about the concept of a paradigm" (1970: 174). While a few authors attempt to use the concept "paradigm" in a way faithful to Kuhn — e.g., Tschannen (1991, 1992) — most seem to use the term to refer to any "theoretical tradition" or "perspective" in their field. This is what Warner, Finke and Stark, and Iannaccone are doing

when they say that the economies of religion is a "new paradigm." I prefer Lakatos's (1978) concept of "scientific research programmes," but use "paradigm" in this paper for the sake of terminological parallelism and to highlight the comparison I am making between different views of secularization.

5 Substituting waggery for argument, the book opens as follows: "At least since the Enlightenment, most Western intellectuals have anticipated the death of religion as eagerly as ancient Israel awaited the messiah" (p. 1). Stark & Iannaccone (1992: 2029) offer a variation on this theme when they write, "Since the mid-nineteenth century, and perhaps earlier, social scientists have awaited the death of religion as eagerly as any dispensationalist Christian sect has awaited the second coming."

6 To the contrary, new paradigm theorists *assume* secularization at the societal level. According to Warner (1993: 1050), "the analytic key to the new paradigm is the disestablishment of the churches and the rise of an open market for religion." That disestablishment and an "open market" for religion — i.e., institutional differentiation or religious disestablishment on the societal level — is the main explanatory variable in the "religious economies" model is without question. While religious disestablishment is an important variable in their theories, they do not consider it as evidence of secularization, which is a crucial blindness in the postsecularization perspective.

7 The more general processes underlying this are a privatization and personalization of religion, which secularization theorists have seen as a consequence of societal-level secularization (Tschannen 1991).

8 Sociologists today can speak of "differentiation" only with some trepidation since the concept is stigmatized by its past association with such currently *gauche* views as functionalism and modernization theory. In order to avoid this stigma, I will use it in a limited way with some important amendments to its earlier Parsonian usage. Chaves (1994: 751) summarizes these four amendments, drawn mostly from Alexander (1990). First, "the assumption of a master trend toward differentiation in all spheres is dropped." Second, "the 'functionalist fallacy' — by which we infer that extant institutions meet some legitimate societal need merely because they exist — is avoided." Third, "the requirement for value integration is dropped." And finally, "rather than identifying the ends of one or another societal sphere . . . with the ends of society as a whole, new differentiation theory understands no single sector as necessarily primary in the sense of gathering within itself the essential goals of the entire society."

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