

CHAPTER 2 – THE CLASH BETWEEN SECULARISM AND MONOTHEISM

WHEN REASON IS AGAINST MAN, MAN WILL TURN AGAINST REASON
—DAVID HUME

The primary thesis of *Secular Hope* is that the underlying cause of the modern religious resurgence is the myth of monotheism. By studying monotheism, as opposed to the Reformation, the concerns of believers become easier to articulate in rational terms. Simultaneously, the concerns of secularists can be more clearly addressed because the wall of separation was designed to contain absolute monotheism that threatens all citizens' freedom of conscience. Finally, understanding monotheism significantly improves the possibility of reconciling the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions because it starts the discussion from a point of commonality.

The secondary thesis of *Secular Hope* is that America's political crisis is merely a crisis of language.ⁱ America does not have a constitutional crisis; and it is not engaged in an irreconcilable clash between civilizations. America's only problem is its failure to appreciate the critical difference between *secularization* and *secularism*, which is easiest to understand after a historical review of monotheism.ⁱⁱ This chapter therefore, first reviews the unique nature of myth, then moves onto the historical development of both monotheism and secularism. It then compares the underlying assumptions of each and concludes by showing why the two concepts are irreconcilable. Chapter Three introduces the solution, secularization.

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF MYTH

Constitutions are *ahistorical* documents in that they must rest on universal truths that can transcend time in order to gain their authority. In this regard, constitutions share the same function as myths—which is why the current clash is between the constitutional objectives of secularism and the myth of monotheism. Understanding myths as critical frameworks of unarticulated assumptions,ⁱⁱⁱ rather than rationalizations for outdated superstitions, reframes the current political gridlock as a conflict of translation, and not as battles between religious and secular, educated versus ignorant, or even worse, good versus evil. Understanding the modern value in the myth of monotheism is critical to rebuilding the trust necessary to identify and sustain a permanent solution to America's conflicts.

Joseph Campbell, Karen Armstrong and Northrop Frye have all significantly contributed to the academic work that has uncovered the nature and the current social value of myths. The following quotations demonstrate why understanding the nature of

myth provides for a more elegant explanation of the recent return to religion than the Secularism Lite thesis or Peter Berger's three explanations. Campbell's first quotation, critiquing a leading psychologist from the 1890s, still applies to today's secularists:

He seems to have had no sense at all of their relevance and importance to inner life, and was confident with the progress and development of science and technology, both magic and religion would ultimately fade away, the ends that they had been thought to serve being better and more surely serviced by science.^{iv}

Campbell on the primacy of mythical influence on human values:

When we consider ... the psychological character of our species, the most evident distinguishing sign is man's organization of his life according to mythic, and only secondarily economic, aims and laws. Food and drink, reproduction and nest-building, it is true, play formidable roles in the lives no less of men than of chimpanzees. But what of the economics of the Pyramids, the cathedrals of the Middle Ages, Hindus starving to death with edible cattle strolling all around them, or the history of Israel, from the time of Saul until now? If a differentiating feature is to be named, separating human from animal psychology, it is surely this of the subordination in the human sphere of even economics to mythology.^v

Campbell's next quotation exposes fundamentalism as a limitation of mythical thinking. However, it also shows what secularism must create in order to fully usurp the influence of myth:

Now the peoples of all the great civilizations everywhere have been prone to interpret their own symbolic figures literally, and so to regard themselves as favored in a special way, in direct contact with the absolute ... For not only has it always been the way of multitudes to interpret their own symbols literally, but such literally symbolic forms have always been—and still are, in fact—the supports of their civilization, the supports of their moral orders, their cohesion, vitality, and creative powers.^{vi}

Myth's advantage is that it entertains, while reason must teach, explain, and lecture. Therefore, mythology is more broadly accessible in a way that political philosophy is not. Indeed, the competition can be fierce, because myths can actually impede rational thinking. In the words of Lenn Goodman, a professor of philosophy at Vanderbilt University:

Myth devours category distinctions typical in conceptual thinking. Notoriously, it collapses distinctions of self from other, subject from object, class (tribe, species, kind) from individual, cause from effect, things from names, or wholes from parts—not least in mythic expressions of the experience of the divine.^{vii}

Because myth does not specify subjects and objects, it can easily encourage self-serving rationalizations to be projected as the will of God, or absolute truth. The

longest serving example of this mythical thinking is the myth of the divine right of kings. This circular logic can be summarized as—Henry conquered therefore God willed it to be (might = right), and now that Henry clearly has God’s blessing, he can legitimately use violence to preserve God’s will (right = might). While this example seems outdated, this type of thinking continues to seduce politicians, executives, and athletes today, who once elected, hired or drafted, believe that they are above the rules. They no longer see themselves as *subject* to the law, or to any promises they have made. This rationalization is summarized in Lord Acton’s saying “Power tends to corrupt; and Absolute Power corrupts absolutely”. While this is the downside to mythical thinking, the same technique of switching subject/object or cause and effect, can also be used for good reasons, as will be explored later.

With this understanding of myth’s strengths and weaknesses, the exact nature of the myth of monotheism which is enjoying a global resurgence today, can be appropriately understood and appreciated. The following historical review reveals the assumptions of monotheism which can be then be compared to the “supporting” assumptions of secularism.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF MONOTHEISM

Monotheism is the belief that there is only one God and it is a shared tenet of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is not clear whether Judaism was influenced by the monotheism of ancient Egypt or by Zoroastrianism during the Babylonian captivity of the sixth century BCE. Indeed, it is not even clear if Moses was truly monotheistic or merely monolaterist (worshipping one god while acknowledging the existence of others). However, what is clear is that today all three religions subscribe to the basic tenets of monotheism; the development of which can be most easily traced in Egyptian history.

In ancient Egypt the first sign of monotheism arose in the god Ptah, the god of the craftsmen. Ptah created eight other gods who were themselves also able to create, but whose creations were still considered to be manifestations of Ptah. It was said that when Ptah spoke, the world came into being. According to G.I.A.D. Draper, in the god Ptah we first “see the idea of an invisible, unknowable God who knows everything.”^{viii} This idea reflects the first tenet of monotheism—that there is one ultimate creator with an objective, universal perspective of the entire world. The world therefore is a cohesive unit, not merely a collection of random events or competing forces.

By 1500 BCE, Amen was referenced in the following line from a hymn “Legitimate Lord, father of the gods, who created man and made all the animals.” The phrase “Legitimate Lord, father of the Gods” evidences for the first time that one supreme god was given complete political legitimacy because he was the creator of *all* beings. This hymn shows how political power was derived from metaphysical creative powers and is consistent with the idea of natural law. This orientation is still reflected in the English tradition of the Archbishop of Canterbury conducting the coronation ceremonies of its monarchy, as well in the references to “God” that can be found in

most political constitutions. Finally, connecting the creation of the world with political legitimacy instilled the idea that understanding our essential nature is morally relevant.

By 1400 BCE, the first truly monotheistic god appeared as the Egyptian Sun god Aten. He was identified as “the Lord of the Universe and the distant lands” and clearly commanded the elimination of all other gods during the reign of Akhenaten between 1370-50 BCE.^{ix} This imperial aspect of monotheism, which commands an exclusive political commitment, is the problematic aspect of monotheism.

The final step in the full development of monotheism, according to Draper, is represented in the personalized nature of the Jewish monotheistic god Yahweh, as a god of each individual, not just the Israelite people.^x This is an extension of the concept of God being the creator of all human beings. A key aspect of all three monotheist religions is that God has a personal interest in every individual’s well-being. This aspect of monotheism has been expressed recently in more modern language, where individuals become the subject of the concept. Harvey Cox in his recent book *The Future of Faith* defined religion, or more specifically faith, as our unique approaches to the mystery of human nature.¹¹

In summary, the central tenet of monotheism is that Yahweh/God/Allah is a metaphor for a universal moral truth. In addition to the direct references to the highest truth in religious scripture, the very notion of God’s power and authority lies in the fact that he/she sees and understands everything and therefore cannot be lied to. Hence, ultimate justice can only be delivered by one who sees the whole truth. This is not to suggest that Yahweh/God/Allah is *only* a metaphor for truth, but rather that for the purposes of understanding secularization, it is necessary to agree that a critical aspect of the monotheistic concept of God is a reference to an objective universal moral truth. The final aspect of this objective truth is that it concerns our essential human nature, therein serving as a legitimating source of political power, much like the concept of natural law.

Monotheism is more than just a statement on the number of gods that may exist—it is worthy of the term *mythos*, because in the words of Joseph Campbell, it provides the “supports of our civilization, moral orders, cohesion, vitality, and creative powers”. Monotheism provides the structural tension underlying all three monotheistic religions which is that one God created the incredible diversity of all human beings. In this regard, monotheism is no different than a constitution that claims universal moral authority over a culturally pluralistic society. Ironically, the mythos monotheism becomes more relevant in a globalized society, not less.

In the West, legal moral reasoning has recently evolved separately from religious morality, but both moral codes share monotheism’s objective of enunciating laws that are universally applicable. The following is a list of the assumptions contained in the myth of monotheism which can then be compared with those contained in variations of secularism.

DEFINING MONOTHEISM AND MONOTRUIISM

Based on the preceding historical review, monotheism can be summarized with the following assumptions. This definition represents an absolute form of monotheism, that few now practice, but it is easiest to start with the purest form in order to understand the framework of assumptions.

1. There is an objective, universal truth regarding human nature (monotruism) that underlies beliefs about right and wrong (morality);
2. Religion is the only means of understanding that universal moral truth;
3. Only one religion is the legitimate means of understanding moral truth.

When considering the success of the traditional secularization theory, it was correct in essentially predicting the demise of the second and third of monotheism's assumptions—that religion, and one religion in particular, is the exclusive path to universal truth. For most of the world, at issue now is the question of whether we should proceed with an understanding that there is one objective truth worth pursuing politically, or should we be content with multiple versions of truth.

The residual value in the myth of monotheism, that is critical to understanding the following discussion on secularism, may be called monotruism. While this concept is close to the idea of monism (all matter is a unified whole) or universalism (all people will be saved) it is narrower in that it merely asserts that an objective truth regarding human nature exists, and underlies concepts of right and wrong ways to treat each other. Now, secularism may be explained as variations on each of monotheism's three dimensions. And similarly, secularism is best understood by reviewing its developmental history.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SECULARISM

The term secular covers a great variety of constitutional models—but their common characteristic is their objective of divesting religion of its exclusive moral authority. Secular governments, which have only existed in the last three hundred years, of our five thousand years of human civilization, can be distinguished as those whose political decision makers receive their legitimacy from rational theories of governance. Prior to this time, monarchies and institutional churches co-ruled on the theological premise of the divine right to rule. At its most basic level, secular means that political authority vests on rational, not theological grounds.

The meaning of the term *secularism* has evolved significantly as the role of religion has changed in society. Secularism was first coined by George Holyoake in 1851 but quickly altered by Charles Bradlaugh in 1856, who co-founded the National Secular Society in England. Attempts to keep up with its meaning have resulted in the use of relative descriptors such as hard/soft, open/restrictive, radical/non-radical. These

descriptors, however, have only compounded the confusion because the original point of reference varies by country and time.

As more meaningful alternatives, Romantic Secularism, Rational Secularism and Postmodern Secularism are proposed because they reference the assumptions that put them at odds with monotheism as well as being grounded in the evolution of term. Just as with the term monotheism, it is helpful to understand the developmental history of the term *secularism* because more specific definitions create more opportunities for compromise. The chart located in *Appendix I Comparing Assumptions* allows for easier comparisons between monotheism and each of the different forms of secularism.

When reason was first advanced as an alternative source of moral authority, few were convinced that humans could actually reason objectively enough because the predominant view at the time was that humans were naturally selfish. This position was rationally argued by Thomas Hobbes (1588-1689), but was more widely accepted on the basis of the theological notion of original sin. Consequently, Enlightenment thinkers like Locke (1632-1704) and Voltaire (1694-1778) were not immediately successful in having their ideas implemented.

It first took Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1712-1778) Romantic Movement to convince the West that human nature was essentially good before humans would be trusted with the independent ability to reason and vote. Rousseau, as the poet's philosopher, believed that without oppressive institutions, humans were naturally moderate and compassionate and therefore could be relied upon to use their own sentiments and ability to reason to effectively govern themselves. Rousseau's arguments were widely and readily accepted and thus played a critical role in the political de-establishment of both the church and monarchy in France and America.

Romanticism paved the way for both reason and sentiment to flourish, but it was sentiment that played the leading role. Thomas Paine's infamous pamphlet "Common Sense" was not entitled "Learned Reason" and even he was not an atheist. Neither was Jefferson.^{xi} Nor was he an advocate of judicial supremacy as many of today's secularists would like to believe. In Jefferson's view the people were clearly the final arbiters of all political conflicts. With the new American constitution, it was the "common sense" of the people that usurped moral authority from the mutually entrenching monarchy and institutional churches.

The important point is that in order to understand the history of secularism, it is necessary to reframe politics not as a two-sided tug of war between reason and religion, but rather like a three-legged stool. Truth is a trinity of reason (mind), personal experiences and feelings (body) and religion (spirit). Truth is a trinity because each has their respective strengths and weaknesses. Romantic Secularism, tried to balance all three, and was the first response to the tyranny that often resulted from granting monarchs the absolute right to rule.

ROMANTIC SECULARISM

Romantic Secularism is based on a social contract that proposes that the highest political values are individual freedom and equality. Romantic Secularism respects the role of reason and religion in forming one's beliefs, but really champions the individual and their right to their own experiences. Hence the liberal democracies of Romantic Secularism always ensure that individual human rights are constitutionally entrenched. The American Constitution was the first expression of Romantic Secularism. Its most defining feature is the constitutional wall that separates the private realm of beliefs or spirituality from the public, material world of actions so that individual freedom of conscience would always be protected.

Romantic Secularism was not in direct conflict with monotheism because the wall of separation allowed montruism (belief in one moral truth for all) to be practiced by both church and state, but only within their respective jurisdictions. By separating the institutions of church and state, American citizens were the first to gain the unprecedented power to choose both their religious beliefs and their governments. Romantic Secularism can be expressed in the following assumptions:

1. There are two moral universes: one public and one private;
2. Each citizen is sufficiently free to have their own personal experiences, religious beliefs and reasoning; and through the right to vote is allowed to contribute to the determination of the universal moral truth in the public realm;
3. Governments are to remain neutral with regard to private beliefs in order to protect equality and freedom of religion and conscience.

Romantic Secularism is appropriately titled for three reasons. Firstly, it was rationalized on the belief that *individuals* using their experiences and sentiments were better trusted than institutional clergy or bureaucrats, to arrive at moral conclusions. Secondly, it reflected the sentimental belief that the private and public realms could co-exist without conflict. For some this belief rested on the assumption that religious values would remain consistent with the universal moral truth as rationally determined by the political system. This opinion was expressed by John Adams: "The substance and essence of Christianity, as I understand it, is eternal and unchangeable, and will bear examination forever."^{xii}

Finally, it was a romantic notion in the sense that it was only a theoretical compromise. Few truly gave up believing in a universal truth that covered both sides of the wall of separation. Both sides considered it a practical, temporary compromise that would disappear as their version truth eventually converted the other. For the secularist, this meant that secularization would eventually render religious beliefs obsolete. For the religious, it meant that eventually God's moral truth would triumph either in the afterlife or here on earth through universal acceptance of Christianity. This is the

unifying power of metaphor at work; the ability to gloss over inconsequential differences, in order to build common ground.

All things considered, the private/public jurisdictional wall did work very well for over two hundred years. This was because for the most part churches had no interest in the *Bees Keeper Act* and the state had no interest in declaring saints. Most importantly, where there was overlapping interest; there was consistency—murder and theft are both sins and crimes.

Same-sex marriage is proving to be a serious constitutional problem because the jurisdictional rules do not work with this issue. Marriage does not fall neatly into either private or public classifications, because marriage has both spiritual and material aspects and consequences. The definition of marriage demonstrates how the theoretical line between public and private can break down. Consider the following quotation from an article entitled “Celebrating marriage across Canada” that illustrates the private and public nature of marriage:

Leigh Cousins, who proposed to Mandy Randhawa in October after 11 years of dating, says their marriage is not only a personal affair but a social and political statement to show their hopes and dreams are no different than other couples. “There is something very important and sacred about being public about it,” says Randhawa. “For me it’s a celebration of my love and my choices and my life as an individual.”^{xiii}

Unfortunately, when the private/public line breaks down, and protected freedoms clash with equality rights, Romantic Secularism has no way to declare a winner by appealing to a higher value. In Canada, this legal conundrum was explored in a 2005 article in Ontario’s *Lawyers Gazette*.^{xiv}

While courts have been expanding equality rights to cover a range of different types of discrimination not specifically set out in Section 15, the real test to its mettle will come when courts are forced to stack it up against other protected rights.

Beverley Baines, a law professor at Queen’s University, was quoted in the same article:

“However, I don’t think we fully grasped the threat that major religion – Christianity, Islam and Judaism – would pose for woman’s equality rights...” Baines says she was “astounded to learn that 75–90% of marriages in Canada involved some form of religious auspices.” She thinks “churches should get out of the marriage business” otherwise it will be difficult to keep civil and religious regulation of marriage separate. While the Supreme Court insists there is no hierarchy of rights in the Charter, there is no “clear foundation to sustain it” she says.

The second reason for today’s crisis is that there is a clear moral conflict between the principles underlying liberal democracies and most traditional religions because their scriptures are quite explicit on the heterosexual nature of marriage. Finally, all the major religions are consistent on the issue (even Buddhism as expressed by the Dalai Lama) making political majorities much easier to obtain. Even abortion did

not have the power to unite the religious community politically; therefore this is a significant development in the history of Romantic Secularism.

Across the United States, courts have not found traction in resolving the same-sex marriage debate because, just like the Canadian Constitution, the American Constitution has no principled way to settle a conflict between equality rights and freedom of religion. Acknowledging that there is no higher principle to break the tie, David Blankenhorn and Jonathan Rauch, arch-enemies on the same-sex marriage issue, wrote the following warning in 2009 as an appeal for compromise:

In all sharp moral disagreements, maximalism is the constant temptation. People dig in, positions harden and we tend to convince ourselves that our opponents are not only wrong-headed but also malicious and acting in bad faith. In such conflicts, it can seem not only difficult but wrong to compromise on a core belief. But clinging to extremes can also be quite dangerous, a scorched-earth debate, pitting what some regard as a nonnegotiable religious freedom against what others regard as a nonnegotiable human right, would do great harm to our civil society. When a reasonable accommodation on a tough issue seems possible, both sides should have the courage to explore it.^{xv}

As of March 2010, American states continued to be split on same-sex marriage, and if the current trend of Americans settling in like-minded communities continues, then federalism is at risk. The practical limitations of the theory behind the separation of church and state will only become more obvious as unforeseen consequences arising from conflicts between woman's issues, reproductive technologies, and bioethics are litigated. In summary, same-sex marriage is the issue that has created a constitutional crisis for Romantic Secularism because:

1. Marriage is a public announcement of a private commitment with both public (property) and private (spiritual) implications, making a mockery of the private/public distinction necessary for the smooth functioning of Romantic Secularism;
2. All traditional religions are consistent on the matter making a majority easier to achieve;
3. Splitting marriage into its spiritual (religious marriage) and material aspects (secular civil unions) still does not offer the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) community the full acceptance and feelings of equality they are seeking;
4. As Hobbes first articulated, monotheistic religions teach a higher allegiance to their religion over state authority, creating a profound crisis where the two conflict;

5. Both sides have constitutionally-protected rights at stake, and each believes the other side is betraying the spirit of the secular constitution, rather than acknowledging the limits of the constitution.

The consequence is that individual citizens drift to morally consistent communities, rather than separate their political and spiritual morality. Next in the history of secularism is Rational Secularism, which has also played a significant, if indirect, role in American and international politics.

RATIONAL SECULARISM

Rational Secularism asserts the untouchable supremacy of reason above all other forms of knowledge. Communism is an example of Rational Secularism and is based on the theory that economic equality is the only foundation for true human freedom. It was originally proposed by Karl Marx and its dogmatic nature is best expressed by his quotation “The meaning of peace is the absence of opposition to socialism.”

Rational Secularism does not believe that reason and religion should be reconciled by citizens, or anyone else, because religion is only useful for keeping workers unconscious of, and therefore satisfied with, their economic slavery. Further, communism does not believe that citizens should reconcile their personal experiences with reason, because only a select group of intellectuals were capable of resisting the temptation to own private property—the source of all inequality. Consequently, under communist regimes, both religion and human rights are legitimately suppressed by law. Rational Secularism is most similar to Absolute Monotheism as both must control education, the flow of information, freedom of association and non-government organizations in order to be successful. This similarity is easiest to appreciate by comparing the three assumptions of Rational Secularism with Absolute Monotheism:

1. There is only one universal moral truth;
2. *Reason*, as articulated by proletarian dictatorship, is the only legitimate path to a universal truth and freedom;
3. Proletarian reasoning based on the assumption that establishing equality is the only legitimate path to universal truth and freedom.

As history has shown, Soviet Communism was defeated on each level of commitment:

1. There was more than one truth. No one could live with the truth of communism, least of all its leaders. George Orwell said it best in *Animal Farm*: “All animals are created equal, but some are more equal than others”;

2. The resilience of religious beliefs, despite seriously weakened Churches, suggests the truth in revelation to be at least as compelling, if not superior to the rational values of communism;
3. Many citizens continually risked their lives to live in freedom, providing contrary empirical evidence to the theory that equality was the best path to freedom.

Reaction to monotheism's religious dogma (unquestionable truths) set off a chain of equally dogmatic rational claims, hence producing equally violent and abusive regimes. Monotheism was first countered by Communism, which was then itself challenged by the even more dogmatic Axis Powers of WWII. The Anti-Comintern Pact signed by Germany and Japan in 1936, and Italy in 1937 was designed to counter to the absolute truth claims of Communism:

Recognizing that the aim of the Communist International, known as the Comintern, is to disintegrate and subdue existing States by all the means at its command; convinced that the toleration of interference by the Communist International in the internal affairs of the nations not only endangers their internal peace and social well-being, but is also a menace to the peace of the world desirous of co-operating in the defense against Communist subversive activities.

Countering the montruism of Marxism, on the basis of the supremacy of the Aryan race, the Nazi regime quickly became the most repugnant form of Rational Secularism for murdering between 11-17 million people (Jewish, homosexual, disabled, Polish, Romani, Soviet, Marxist, clergy, and intellectual) on the common rationale that by even existing, they challenged the truth of German superiority or Hitler's right to absolute rule. Hitler's rationalization was that he could prove Aryan superiority if he could just first eliminate all these 'obstacles'. The American equivalent can be found in the white nationalism advocated by the Ku Klux Klan. All Rational Secularists align their ideas with God's will, which is universal of course, and therefore the right thing to do becomes killing anyone who challenges the universality of their ideas: Right=might, therefore might=right. Rationalizing is reasoning but with the cause and effect completely reversed.

Legitimate concerns with montruistic claims include how easily they may be abused by political rhetoric that prey on of feelings of inferiority and despair. Dogmatists are those who subscribe exclusively to either reason or religion as the only means of knowing truth, with a simultaneous commitment to one absolute truth. Dogmatists will insist upon the universality of their version of truth by *cynically* dismissing dissenters as morally deficient, blasphemous, uneducated, too vulnerable to admit the reality of their own situations, opiate-addicted or evil, therein justifying violence or oppression in the name of progress, equality, nationalism, God, peace, or civilization. Rational Secularism is especially prone to fail when it advances a theory of human nature that is only validated by the experiences of a limited population, the

extreme example being a dictator basing his reasoning solely on his own subjective desires and experiences.

The dogmatic forms of both Absolute Monotheism and Rational Secularism have justified the most horrible wars to “prove” their universal claims. However, we must remain vigilant against milder forms. Rational Secularism has re-emerged with the new atheists of Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens. The new atheists see religion as irreconcilable with moral truth, fundamentally flawed and nothing but an obstacle to peace. New atheists would limit the freedom of conscience/religion if they had a significant political following. Once again this *defensive* movement is responding to the violence of absolute monotheists—but it is critical not to make the same mistakes as the last set of Rational Secularists. This can be done by trying to understand the positive allure of monotheism, while remaining wary of its violent potential. This brings us to Postmodern Secularism which tries to avoid the danger of absolute truth claims by constitutionalizing diversity.

POSTMODERN SECULARISM

Postmodern Secularism is heavily influenced by the academic work that evolved in response to the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps of the 1930’s and 40’s and the Soviet human right abuses that were exposed in the 1980’s. It is also simultaneously responding to increased pressure to expand the public sphere in which religious beliefs can play a legitimate role. The United Nations (UN), Canada and the European Union (EU) all adopted their secular commitment to human rights following WWII (the UN in 1948, Canada in 1982, and the EU in 2000). Therefore each adopted this form of secularism which share variations of the Preamble contained in the 1948 UN Declaration on Human Rights:

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law...^{xvi}

Postmodern Secularism goes further than Romantic Secularism’s neutrality on spiritual beliefs by elevating human dignity, equality, tolerance, and diversity of

cultures, as the highest political values, even above freedom. The assumptions of Postmodern Secularism follow this line of reasoning:

1. There is no universal truth regarding human nature that underlies morality;
2. Personal experiences, religion and reasoning are all valid paths to multiple truths, but only to the point that they are tolerant of other's experiences;
3. The highest common moral truth is pluralism, tolerance and equality of self-respect.

There are four ways for Romantic Secularism to evolve into Postmodern Secularism. One way is to erase the jurisdictional boundaries that enforce state neutrality by settling disputes between freedom of religion and equality rights in favor of ensuring diversity. A second method is to encourage the state to use its powers to restrict freedoms when feelings of self-respect are harmed. This is justified on the basis that it is not enough for the state to ensure that everyone is equally free to express and live out their own beliefs, but rather states should ensure that minorities *feel* that their beliefs are equally respected so that they can live with equal dignity. A third strategy is often required to overrule majority votes in order to enforce tolerance, especially when countering religiously informed beliefs. Finally, seeking to reconcile American rights with international human rights covenants would also cause America's Romantic Secularism to morph into Postmodern Secularism.

While Postmodern Secularism effectively guards against the abuses of Rational Secularists and Absolute Monotheists, and addresses the short-comings of Romantic Secularism, there are three serious problems with it. The common thread of which is that Postmodern Secularism is at irreconcilable odds with monotheism and is causing the global religious resurgence. Many mild monotheists have a problem seeing this conflict because they see the essence of their religions as promoting tolerance and compassion. Hopefully, the following reasons will help them understand.

1. REJECTS MONOTRUISM

While claiming to respect diversity, Postmodern Secularism cannot accommodate monotheists (over 80% of Americans).^{xvii} However, the rejection is not due to the imperial or tyrannical aspects of monotheism contained in the second and third assumptions, but rather the first philosophical assumption of monotheism, monotruiism. Postmodern Secularism does not tolerate monotruiism because in postmodern societies there is no higher truth than tolerance, plurality and equality. This line of thinking makes the personal or subjective experience of truth, the highest form of truth. On specific issues, particularly those related to sexuality, this rationale seems justified but it has far-reaching consequences that are causing havoc in other areas of morality, where trust is critical.

The historical event that prompted the majority of Americans to trade reason in for religion demonstrates the importance of montruism's commitment to objective truth that underlies trust. In 1998, President Bill Clinton's indiscretions with Monica Lewinsky made their way into the public sphere and marked the end of the paved road for unfettered liberalism in the United States. When President Clinton tried to get away with his subjective definition of "I did not have sexual relations with that woman"; the majority of Americans reacted strongly by voting in the opposite bias. Allegiance to objective truth is the basis of security in all personal, business and governmental relationships. It is the foundation of morality; it is not its enemy.

2. REJECTS THE EXPERIENCES OF THE MAJORITY

It is easy to justify Postmodern Secularism when the conflict is pitched as a David and Goliath battle between the personal dignity of a homosexual versus the intolerant, 3,000 year old scripture condemning him to death. However, it should be considered that members of the religious right may also have *personal experiences* that they understandably do not wish to discuss publicly, but contradict the theory of human nature articulated by human rights cases that granted protection of homosexual rights. Members of the religious right may be attracted to their religions, not out of passive inheritance, economic vulnerability, or hatred/fear of homosexuals but rather because their churches articulate, and support, a concept of human sexuality that most closely mirrors their *own* personal experiences and psychological needs.

While it is agreed that most, if not all, homosexuals *do not* have a choice with regard to their sexuality, there is plenty of evidence to show that many heterosexuals *do* experience a choice with regard to their sexuality. A recent large study showed that 25% of junior and high school students were confused over their sexuality, even when the heterosexual category was qualified as *predominately* heterosexual. However the vast majority of the confused students, with time and experience, eventually realized a predominantly heterosexual identity, while less than 2% identified as exclusively homosexual or bi-sexual.^{xviii}

As the Kinsey Report infamously argued over sixty years ago, the far more common experience of sexual orientation is to experience a choice especially during adolescence and then to identify as predominantly, but not exclusively, heterosexual as an adult. While it can be argued that one's *degree* of choice may be fixed after adolescence, clearly there is a choice to be made if one wants to enter into a monogamous marriage for life. Monogamous marriages with children remain the ideal form of relationships therefore choices, with long-term and wide-spread moral implications, do need to be made. Further, the now visible gay community in the public sphere continually reminds them of this choice, and hence their attraction to private institutions that acknowledge and support them in their choice. One does not have to be a Freudian to see how this would explain homophobia and why the religious right is claiming that same-sex marriage affects the stability of their families.

It is critical to understand the nuanced nature of this argument. Homosexuals, as human beings and citizens, are fully deserving of respect and protection as guaranteed by civil/human rights. That issue thankfully is largely past the need for further discussion. Further, given their higher suicide rates, obviously homosexuals rarely experience having a degree of choice with regard to their sexuality. However, there are many ways for this to still be true, but not necessarily be a universal attribute of human nature.

Religious beliefs may be a shield against a secular theory of human nature that contradicts believers own personal experiences and choices. Understandably, the judgmental aspect of religious support is troubling; but why go so far as to deny the element of choice for others? The implications of implying that *nobody* has a choice with regard to their sexuality, albeit for the compassionate reasons of trying to assist homosexuals with accepting their unique identities, needs to be re-considered. To deprive others of any choices they may have, was not the motivation of the GLBT community but it is having this effect.

It is suggested that the reason for this unfortunate conflict is that the inflexible legal moral code, only granted human rights protection on the basis of “immutable” characteristics, forcing this strategy on the GLBT and their advocates. While it has the right effect for the gay community, the underlying premise is wrong and is resulting in an irreconcilable fight over human nature and morality that is causing a counter-resurgence of hyper-masculinity and monotheism. It is important to stress that that the gay community deserves human right protection; but that an inflexible legal test forced an exaggerated truth claim.

3. SIBLING SOCIETY

That some members of the GLBT community even *want* religiously blessed marriages in a secular age raises the most compelling aspect of monotheism. When monotheism is considered mythically, meaning the subject and object are reversed, the notion that there is only one God who created all human beings, allows every individual to conclude “I *must* belong”. When multiple Gods/universes/truths become the philosophical foundation for a society, the “must” disappears. Now individuals must make the decision of where to belong, creating in most people a level of existential angst that is very difficult to endure.

The Postmodern equivalent of monotheism’s universal claim was articulated as the “inherent dignity of all members of the human family”. While this concept ensures equal access to civil rights, it falls well short of providing the full psychological/spiritual comfort provided by montruism’s assumption of a universal truth regarding human nature. Postmodern Secularism can protect but it cannot comfort.

The most detrimental aspect of losing the commitment to objective truth is that it turns citizens into siblings without parents, where nobody is wiser than anyone else.^{xix} This explains why the GLBT community is seeking monotheistic equality in the

definition of marriage, not just civil equality. They are seeking universal respect and acknowledgement, not just tolerance. Unfortunately, it is impossible for the state to provide. The state can only write and enforce laws, it cannot create community.

This review of secularism does not come to a promising conclusion: neither Romantic nor Postmodern Secularism, are viable options to significant portions of America. Is there a way out of these profound conflicts? It's hard to concentrate as the laughter of the Greek gods grows louder by the day. However, there are three promising clues left to explore: i) the taunting maxim "Know Thyself" inscribed in the Temple of Apollo at Delphi and reiterated by John Adams in his quotation:

Every Species of these Christians would persecute Deists, as [much] as either Sect would persecute another, if it had unchecked and unbalanced Power. Nay, the Deists would persecute Christians, and Atheists would persecute Deists, with as unrelenting Cruelty, as any Christians would prosecute them or one another. *Know Thyself, Human Nature!*^{xx} [Emphasis added].

The second is Harvey Cox's 1965 warning not to lose the distinction between secularism and secularization, and the third lies in Northrop Frye's *The Great Code*. Hopefully, it's not too late to heed their advice.

CHAPTER NOTES

ⁱ Lee and O'Grady (eds.) *Frye on Religion*, 177; Habermas, Jurgen *Religion and Rationality*, 22.

ⁱⁱ Secularism and Secularization are terms that have been interpreted in a variety of ways. While *Secular Hope* explores these definitions in great detail throughout Chapters Two and Three, they are also easily referenced in the Glossary located after Appendix I.

ⁱⁱⁱ For those interested in this fascinating line of study, Northrop Frye's 1990 book *Words with Power, Being A Second Study of The Bible and Literature* is highly recommended as is the work of Lenn E. Goodman.

^{iv} Joseph Campbell, *Myths to Live By* (NY: Penguin Compass, 1972) 13.

^v *Ibid*, 22.

^{vi} *Ibid*, 10.

^{vii} L. E. Goodman, *The God of Abraham* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1996) 6.

^{viii} "The Historical Background on the Concept of Monotheism" found in *The Concept of Monotheism in Islam and Christianity*, Ed. Kochler, Hans, Wilhelm Braumuller A1092- Wien, Austria, p. 34.

^{ix} *Ibid*, 35.

^x *Ibid*, 36.

^{xi} Jefferson was a Deist; he believed that God exists but that he does not intervene in the world.

^{xii} J.F. Adams, (ed.) *The Works of John Adams*, vols. 10 (Boston: Little & Brown, 1850-56) 415-416.

^{xiii} "Celebrating marriage across Canada", Metro News Services Tuesday June 23, 2009.

^{xiv} Lawyers Gazette Fall/Winter 2005, p. 11 published by the Law Society of Upper Canada.

^{xv} New York Times, February 22, 2009. *Sunday Opinion* Week in Review, 11.

^{xvi} <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

^{xvii} Pew Forum 2007 study found at <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf>.

^{xviii} In a large, study of junior and senior high school students in the late 1980s that measured sexual fantasy, emotional attraction, and sexual behavior, more than 25% of 12-year-olds were uncertain about their sexual orientation. This was even when the category of "predominantly heterosexual" was offered. This uncertainty decreased, with time and increasing sexual experience to 5% of 18-year-olds. Only 1.1% reported themselves as predominantly homosexual or bisexual. "Demography of sexual orientation in adolescents" *Pediatrics* 1992; 89: 714 -721.

^{xix} Robert Bly's book *The Sibling Society*, argues that today we have no elders, no children, no past, no future.

^{xx} John Witte Jr. "A most Mild and Equitable Establishment of Religion" John Adams and the Massachusetts Experiment", in *Religion in the New Republic*, ed. James H. Hutson, (ed.), (Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000) p.3-4.