Chapter 3

Secular and Sacred

In the coming decade, *we will witness a growing tension between the secular models of society, governance, business, and economics that have characterized Western modernity and the increasingly sacred worldviews of billions of people on every part of the planet. The secular lies at the heart of Western notions of civilization, with reason, science, and logic trumping religion and belief in the management of civic affairs and the public domain. Secular principles are so embedded in our laws and our institutions that, for the most part, we no longer notice them. Yet the power of the sacred as a mobilizing force is making itself felt with increasing strength. Fundamentalist movements (themselves a direct response to secularization) have emerged in every major religion and are gaining muscle on most continents—and by no means exclusively in the Islamic nations. Meanwhile, an almost opposite—and certainly gentler and more inclusive—"sacred" reaction against the strictly secular can be seen in the rise of spirituality, which also seems poised to play a role in defining our future values, customs, and behaviors.*

Secular

God, protect me from your followers.
—Anonymous

The Enlightenment laid the deep and strong foundation upon which modern Western civilization was built. Enlightenment principles and values, such as reason, tolerance, respect for science, and belief in the virtue of human nature—quite radical in their day—profoundly shaped the Constitution and the character of the United States (the first true democracy), and have continued to spread in influence and deepen in impact for

more than two centuries. Sitting at the core of enlightenment values is secularism, derived from the Latin word *saeculum*, meaning "the present world." Secularism is generally understood as the explicit separation of the religious and church-based from the functioning of the state and the regulation of civic society.

By the mid-nineteenth century, this separation had spread across the Western world, while the role of established religion as an ordering principle for political, economic, and social life waned significantly. Developments—such as the rise of industrialization, migration to urban areas, remarkable economic growth, and the rise in the value of the material over the spiritual—all served to further undermine established religion after it had ceased to be influential in political life. George Holyoake, a friend of the British socialist industrial reformer Robert Owen, coined the term "secularism" in the mid-nineteenth century to refer to a set of beliefs rooted in daily experience and intended to improve the lot of workers in this life rather than reward them in the next. "Secularism is a code of duty pertaining to this life founded on considerations purely human, and intended mainly for those who find theology indefinite or inadequate, unreliable or unbelievable," he explained. Secularism, social reform, and materialism became entwined as complementary factors in adapting to and shaping the modern world.

The Secular Mindset

The secular mindset, while not essentially or necessarily anti-religious, is about more than restricting the influence of religion on civic governance. It is the outcome of a deeper philosophical shift in which reason supplanted belief as the central maker and organizer of meaning, and in which mankind was understood to have the power to shape and change the world to serve human needs and wants without reliance upon God. This shift enabled new modes of enlightened thought and reasoning that came to define secular modernity—they are now so embedded in Western worldviews that they have become invisible and unremarkable.

In particular, the rise of secularism was powerfully linked to a human-centric view of the world that placed the desires of people in a separate category from the needs of other species; the physical environment was but an endless catalogue of resources to be exploited and manipulated to serve human interests. This, in turn, was linked to a powerful belief in science and scientific methods as the means through which incontrovert-

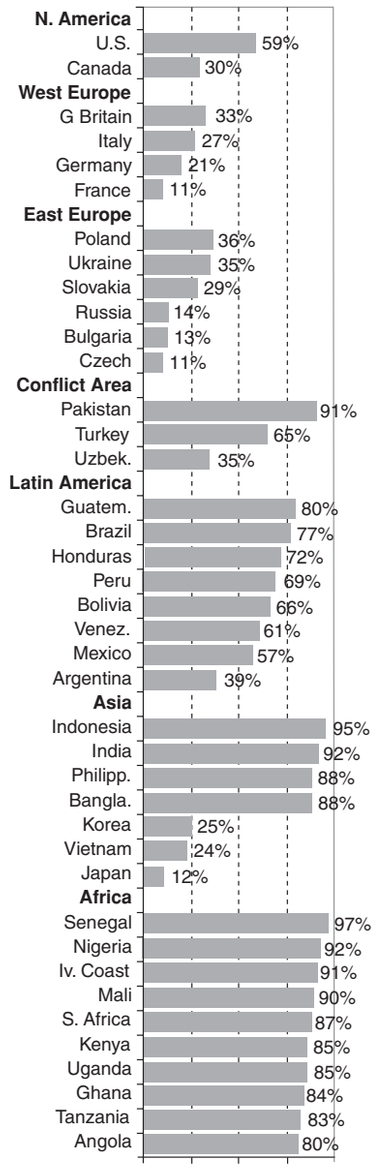
ible truths and single "right answers" about the natural world could be discovered that could then be used to further man's dominion over nature. Above all, secularism fostered a potent and optimistic pragmatism that placed the highest value on knowledge, insights, and ideas that could address and solve the problems that mattered most to mankind.

The Secular Unleashed

The Enlightenment rationality underpinned the development of economics and Western theories of how business should work. Especially in the developed West, it became the guidebook for how to think and perceive the world, as well as how to value and measure success and progress. It also underpins many of our social theories and the ways in which civic society and political systems have been constructed.

The payoffs have been tremendous. Principles and ideals that people in the developed world tend to take for granted today (and sometimes assume to be timeless) owe their origins and their power to the relatively recent Enlightenment perspective. Democracy, freedom, individual liberty, and tolerance of differing belief systems are all offspring of secular modernity. The remarkable march of economic and material progress and growth of the

Importance of Religion in My Life: An International Poll



Source: "Among Wealthy Nations…U.S. Stands Alone in Its Embrace of Religion," The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, December 19, 2002. Reprinted by permission of The Pew Global Attitudes Project.

last two centuries has been fueled in many ways by Enlightenment-inspired scientific and technological innovations. Evolving corporate, legal, regulatory, infrastructural, financial, and governance systems were all influenced enormously by the economic theories that flowed directly from the insights of Adam Smith and his contemporaries. The ongoing spread of wealth and opportunity across much of the world, increase in life expectancy, and growth in literacy rates are a testament to the power and effectiveness of the secular mindset.

Meanwhile, societies that have eschewed Enlightenment principles are generally less wealthy, less equitable, less democratic, and far less innovative. *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman's patent statistics exemplify this fact: "Between 1980 and 1999 the nine leading Arab economies registered 370 patents [in the U.S.] for new inventions," Friedman wrote in 2003. "Patents are a good measure of a society's education quality, entrepreneurship, rule of law, and innovation. During that same 20-year period, South Korea registered 16,328 patents for inventions."

It is not surprising, then, that the secular perspective has taken such firm root. By the mid-twentieth century, the rise of modernity and a shift to the secular had become apparently inseparable. Anthropologist Anthony Wallace captured the prevailing wisdom well when he predicted in the 1960s that "the evolutionary future of religion is extinction." A clear self-reinforcing cycle had begun: as the authority of religion diminishes in social and political affairs, its attractiveness, endurance, and cultural reach falls into decline.

This cycle has been most visible in Europe. In his book *God Is Dead: Secularization in the West*, respected sociologist of religion Steve Bruce takes data from Britain as typical of the trends in the liberal, democratic, economically developed modern world. Whether it is involvement in religious organizations, church attendance, training for the priesthood, commitment to religious ideals, or just simple belief, Bruce concludes that religion has long been in steady decline. He describes modern secular Britain in unambiguous terms: "Christian ideas are not taught in schools, are not promoted by social elites, are not reinforced by rites of passage, and are not taken for granted in the mass media. Given those changes it would indeed be a miracle if Christian ideas were as popular as they were in the 1950s."

A Secular Britain

Percentage of Brits who claimed no religious affiliation in 2000: 44

That percentage in 1983: 31

Percentage drop in the number of people who said they were members of Britain's state religion, from 1983 to 2000: 40

Percentage of 18-to 24-year-olds in the UK who say they have no religious affiliation: 66

Percentage of Brits who claimed to belong to a religion in 2000: 48

Percentage in the U.S.: 86

Percentage in Italy: 92

Percentage of the British population that Peter Bierley, the leading expert on church attendance in Britain, believes will be attending church services in 2040: 0.5

Percentage by which seminary enrollment dropped from 1970 to 1995, according to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University: 50

Sources: BBC News, *The New Criterion*, Associated Press.

Moreover, the dominant powers of today's world—nation-states, multinational corporations, and international organizations—are overwhelmingly secular. This has become the norm in modern global governance and commerce: we expect a separation of church and state, religious tolerance, an absence of religious persecution, and a breaking up of religion's hegemonic or monopolistic power in society. In the West, we have come to expect secularization as a precondition of good governance, so much so that our state-based institutions have difficulty accommodating state-sponsored religion. For example, the European Union has hesitated to welcome Turkey as a member in large measure because of lingering suspicion that its secular constitution may not be truly genuine and that it will revert to operating like an Islamic state.

In the coming decade, secularism will be further reinforced by several factors. The first is the continuing spread of proven business-based practices and approaches across the world and across every sector of activity. The dominant Western model of business is resolutely secular: reason and rationality consistently trump intuition and instinct; data and evidence

overwhelm belief and faith; the quantitative is more trusted than the qualitative. These values continue to spread across the world. Moreover, as the stability of fragile states becomes a matter of growing concern, we can expect global institutions, international lenders, and nongovernmental organizations to place more emphasis on encouraging and enabling "good" local governance arrangements around the world. The core principles of such arrangements will flow directly from the secular paradigm. Finally, the mounting issues of the modern world—large populations to be fed, important security concerns, climatic change, burgeoning energy needs—call for more and better rational, scientific solutions.

Jacques Chirac Bans Head Scarves in French Schools

"The Islamic veil—whatever name we give it—the kippa, and a cross that is of plainly excessive dimensions: these have no place in the precincts of state schools. State schools will remain secular. For that a law is necessary…. Secularism is one of the great conquests of the republic. It is an element crucial to our social peace and national cohesion. We cannot let it weaken. We must work to reinforce it."

Source: The president's address to the nation of France, December 17, 2003.

Today's organizations and institutions came to life during a profoundly secular era and are predominantly ingrained with a secular outlook and values. Looking forward, our sensibilities regarding global politics, economic development, technology change, social and cultural matters, and environmental issues are equally imbued with a strongly secular perspective. However, the very success of secular modernity has generated its own profound challenges, and these will become more pressing in the coming decade.

Weaknesses of the Secular Model

The complexity, connectedness, and volatility of the world today require us to amplify our comfort with ambiguity, tolerance of difference, and openness to alternative interpretations. Yet our embedded forms of secular reasoning sometimes stand in the way of this. The secular worldview is built upon reason and "truth" discovered through scientific methods and debate. This rationalist model has little tolerance for ambi-

guity or doubt; indeed, it tends to be structured around a crisp "either/or" logic through which ambiguities can be conclusively resolved one way or another. This black and white perspective, which increasingly informs civic and political discourse around the world, often leads to polarization and false certainty built around ideological models that are too firmly held as fact rather than opinion. (The greatest such schism is now behind us: the twentieth-century clash between two competing forms of secular modernity, capitalism and communism, both of which were zealously promoted as the "only way" by their advocates.)

Moreover, science and reason are driven largely by evidence, quantification, and measurement, placing significant emphasis on numbers and giving the knowable supremacy over the unknowable. Yet, as Einstein observed: "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts." Today we tend toward an almost obsessive fascination with metrics—measurable indicators that can be tracked and used to judge success and failure, progress and decline. In business, the metrics we choose often drive rather than measure performance, and not always for the better or in the ways intended. The field of education has also developed increased reliance on metrics and measurement in an effort to raise standards and accountability—with the inevitable consequence that an increasing amount of student time is being spent preparing for and taking tests rather than learning. As the old saying goes, "You don't make the hog any heavier by weighing it repeatedly." The strengths of secular approaches become weaknesses when they pull us too far away from our own judgment and provoke unintended consequences.

The secular perspective starts and ends with the needs and desires of mankind; everything else—and crucially, all of nature—is too often regarded as a resource pool to be drawn upon, consumed, and manipulated for human purpose. There is no place in this worldview for the more ancient notion that man "must tread lightly upon the Earth." In the secular scheme, mankind has dominion over the planet, and with science as its key tool, it can and should shape the natural world to human advantage. Luckily, after more than two centuries of rapid economic growth unconstrained by consideration of the impact it might have on the planet and its other species, we are becoming more aware of the profound negative environmental consequences of this perspective. Yet even as we struggle to make real the concept of sustainability, we are in part constrained by our deep-seated, unconscious secular sense of human entitlement.

American "Happiness"

"No society in the history of the world has ever enjoyed the standard of living Americans know today….Yet since 1960, the divorce rate has doubled, teen suicide tripled, violent crime quadrupled, the prison population has quintupled, and some estimates put the incidence of depression in the year 2000 at 10 times what it was in the year 1900. Americans are less happy today than they were 40 years ago, despite the fact that they make 2.5 times as much money."

Source: Barry Schwartz, Ph. D., "Waking Up From the American Dream," *Psychology Today*, July/August 2000. Reprinted by permission of *Psychology Today*. Copyright © 2000 Sussex Publishers, Inc.

By definition, secularism is about improving material conditions in the here and now and worrying less about the spiritual or the "afterlife." This way of thinking has significantly, if invisibly, influenced the science of economics and the practice of business and commerce—sometimes adversely. Materialism and high levels of consumption have become widespread characteristics of developed societies. Yet they do not appear to be making us any happier. Surveys in most developed countries, including the U.S. and Japan, reveal that there has been no increase in happiness over the last several decades despite substantial economic growth. Depression is on the rise; each year, as many as 14 million American adults experience an episode of major depression, 10 times more than in 1945. According to the World Health Organization, suicide rates have increased by 60 percent worldwide in the last 45 years. WHO now ranks depression as the leading cause of disability globally and projects that depression will be the second leading health problem in the world by 2020.

Complaints about the "soulless" nature of organizations, designed to harness human reason rather than honor human spirit, are also on the rise. Early economists' focus on the production of material and measurable goods led to accounting methodologies that failed to value a great deal of the work that holds families and communities together—particularly work typically undertaken by women, including child-rearing, housework, and relationship nurturing. Businesses and financial markets have little obvious means of connecting with higher moral purpose and are typically obliged to conform to short-term thinking and a desire for immediate returns. These are issues of growing concern today, and are deeply connected to the secular origins of the modern economy.

Above all, the secular mindset, reinforced by two centuries of unrivalled achievement, has perhaps become far too confident about the supremacy of its role in shaping the future. Even as secular civilization mobilizes to address challenges generated by its own embedded philosophy, another worldview—less prominent and less of a defining force in recent centuries—is reemerging to take its place at the table. The "sacred" perspective has returned, and the secular world is going to have to learn how to accommodate it.

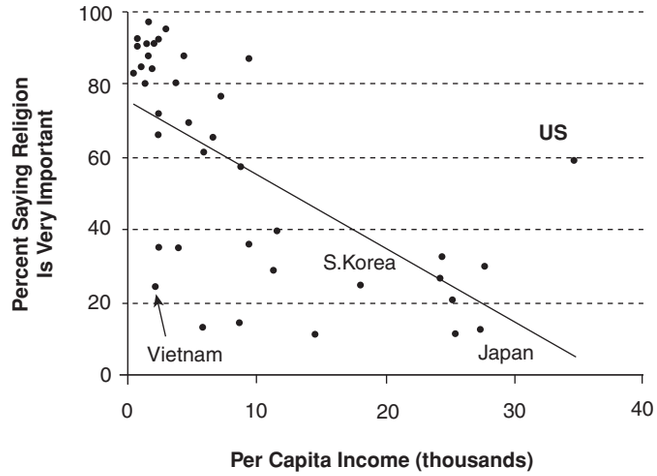
Sacred

I've read the last page of the Bible. It's all going to turn out alright.
—Billy Graham

To the bewilderment of many Europeans and even many Americans, the 2004 U.S. presidential election highlighted the fundamental yet rising significance of religious conviction in the U.S. today. Perhaps it is not surprising that a country founded and regularly refreshed by immigrants seeking freedom from religious persecution should not only be the first modern secular state but also the one that has sustained the highest levels of religious participation. In the U.S., the epitome of modernity, churches and organized religion have endured as a potent popular and political force. Church attendance remains stable. Sixty percent of Americans say that religion plays an important role in their lives, according to a 2002 Pew Research Center survey. This is so unusual in the developed world that Pew titled its survey report "Among Wealthy Nations…U.S. Stands Alone in Its Embrace of Religion." Pew's conclusion: "Americans' views are closer to people in developing nations than to the publics of developed nations."

Not only have the practice and influence of religion remained strong in the U.S.—they are also growing. Driven by the continued rise of evangelical Christianity in the U.S. since the 1970s, religion has been moving back into the everyday discourse of American civic and political life. In 1984, 22 percent of voters believed that presidential candidates should discuss the role of religion in their lives; 75 percent said that it should not be part of a presidential campaign. The same survey taken by *The New York Times* during the 2004 presidential campaign showed a dramatic change in those figures: 42 percent wanted to hear about candidates' religious beliefs, while just 53 percent thought that religion should be kept out of the campaign.

Poor Nations Very Religious, Wealthy Are Less So…Except for the U.S.



Source: "Among Wealthy Nations…U.S. Stands Alone in Its Embrace of Religion," The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, December 19, 2002. Reprinted by permission of The Pew Global Attitudes Project.

This is a considerable shift in 20 years and confirms the wider fact that the secularization trend is reversing itself in the U.S. It should not be surprising, then, that during his visit to the Vatican in June 2004, President George W. Bush, leader of the world's first constitutionally secular nation, actively sought the intervention of Pope John Paul II in the U.S. election campaign, asking the Pope to acknowledge his anti-abortion credentials. Meanwhile, Bush's campaign team targeted membership lists from Christian churches.

Is the U.S. a curious anomaly—or leading evidence of the broader durability and permanence of the sacred perspective? Secularists have long assumed that with increased prosperity, better education, and the advance of scientific understanding, societies would inevitably turn away from religion. However, this appears to have occurred as expected only in Europe, and emphatically not in the U.S. The evidence elsewhere remains ambiguous and to some extent contradictory. In Muslim countries, for example, opinion appears to embrace both the promise of modern governance and adherence to strict religious rule. A 2003 Pew Global Attitudes Project survey revealed that this dissonance still persists. "People in Muslim countries place a high value on freedom of expression, freedom

of the press, multi-party systems, and equal treatment under the law," the survey found. At the same time, most Muslims "favor a prominent—in many cases expanded—role for Islam and religious leaders in the political life of their countries."

Meanwhile, around much of the world, we are witnessing the phenomenal growth of Pentecostalism, a Christian movement born in the U.S. in the early twentieth century now believed to have more than 20 million adherents in the U.S. and more than 400 million adherents worldwide, as well as the world's largest church—the Yoido Full Gospel Church in South Korea, which in 2003 had 780,000 members. It is interesting to observe that this is a new strand within Christianity—one that places emphasis on the spirit and that is energetic and engaging for its participants, providing grace plus community and belonging. In fact, much of the current growth in religious conviction involves novel forms of the monotheistic religions (perhaps because the moderate establishments of each were largely acquiescent in the move toward secularism). Worryingly, they include a powerful rise in new forms of fundamentalism.

New Fundamentalism

The rise of fundamentalism around the world has been a subject of commentary since the September 11 terrorist attacks. But it was the object of quieter (and generally wiser and more balanced) review long before that. Fundamentalist belief systems are less filled with love and hope than Pentecostalism. They are characterized by exclusivity, certainty, and separateness; they create the potential for increased tribalism and violence, as well as profound assaults on the prevailing secular worldview.

The rise in Islamic fundamentalism continues to be widely regarded as a threat to the Western world, and the U.S. in particular. Less acknowledged is the fact that fundamentalism was on the march during the twentieth century in all three of the monotheistic religions of Abraham and has also been spreading into other religious systems wherever the modern world is making new inroads. In India, there has been a resurgence of Hindu fundamentalism, with reported violence against Christian and Muslim minorities. In South Korea and Taiwan, a "neotraditionalist" Confucianism has emerged. Japan has experienced growth in radical Buddhism, and the Sikh religion has become progressively more fundamentalist, spurred by threats of Hindu and Muslim violence in Northern India. As Phillip Longman says in his book *The Empty Cradle,* if the

birthrate in the developed world continues to decline, it is fundamentalism that will benefit. "In a world of falling human population only fundamentalists would draw new strength," Longman writes. "For the deep messages of the Bible and the Koran…are relentlessly pro-natal."

Religious fundamentalism is not, as is sometimes assumed, a return to old established ways. It is an innovative new phenomenon. The term was first used by American Protestants in the early twentieth century. Indeed, Christianity (in the U.S.) was the first major religion to give birth to a fundamentalist movement. Given the U.S.'s place at the vanguard of secular modernity, this may seem surprising. But fundamentalism is always associated with a sense of threat against the survival of a religious belief system; primarily, it is a fear-driven response to the encroachment of modernity and a coercive secularism. Acclaimed religious historian Karen Armstrong is unequivocal on this: "Fundamentalism is an essential part of the modern scene. Wherever modernity takes root, a fundamentalist movement is likely to rise up alongside it in conscious reaction." As the encroachment of modernity becomes stronger, so the fundamentalist reaction becomes more extreme and entrenched.

This may represent a collective, almost instinctive reaction to increasing complexity and tempestuous change. In a highly unstable world, some will inevitably search for a firm and steady anchor, an absence of ambiguity, and a clear, simple, and authorized set of rules. But fundamentalism can also be viewed as a subset of another, broader reaction to globalization and increased interdependence and interaction: a desire for separateness. Fundamentalist beliefs are by nature exclusive and divisive. A single set of absolute truths can tolerate no competing set of perspectives.

Religious fundamentalism often also holds the promise of a better life in the next world to compensate for earthly suffering or reward committed sacrifice. This is a potent promise—and is one reason that fundamentalism can foster conditions for extremism and violence among many faiths and in many forms. Timothy McVeigh's bombing in Oklahoma City and the 1995 assassination of Israeli President Yitzak Rabin demonstrate that Christianity and Judaism are not immune from spawning their own forms of violence and should also remain causes of concern. However, there is no doubt that the tendency toward violence within

fundamentalist movements is significantly increased by a societal conflict of lingering tensions, conflict, or even war, and that such conditions exist today in many parts of the Islamic world in particular. Islamic fundamentalism (and the extremist violence it can foster) is, without doubt, one of the most significant challenges of the next several decades. It is all too easy to imagine it getting worse before it gets better.

What's Driving Islamic Fundamentalism?

In all the monotheistic religions, fundamentalism builds upon a return to Holy Scripture as the literal foundation for a belief system. Mainstream moderate religious followers tend to embrace a fluid and evolving faith, one in which scripture is considered as much a product of iterative development as the origin of the belief system and is subject to reinterpretation over time. Fundamentalism rejects this openness, seeking to lock down the religion according to the most literal and inflexible interpretation.

The earliest seeds of this reaction in Islam were arguably sown in the eighteenth century with the emergence of the reform movement known as Wahabbism, which, while not itself a fundamentalist movement, sought to eradicate all the characteristics and forms of the religion that had been added since the time of Mohammad. Saudi Arabia, home of Osama bin Laden and most of the September 11 hijackers, is a Wahabbist kingdom.

The teachings of the Sunni Egyptian Sayyid Qutb are a more direct and powerful source of today's Islamic fundamentalism. A member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Qutb served more than a decade in prison in the 1950s and 1960s before being executed by Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1966. He wrote extensively during his imprisonment, producing an enormous multivolume work called *In the Shade of the Qu'ran*. Qutb's writings laid the foundation for today's Islamic extremism and violence and provide the philosophical underpinnings for Al Qaeda. The core of his philosophy is simple: for centuries, the Christian West has been driving a wedge between the godly and the scientific, between reason and belief. The result is a "hideous dichotomy" that has led to great and growing human misery and despair that is now being exported steadily all over the world.

Qutb: The Philosopher of Islamic Terror

The core of Qutb's argument was neatly summarized by Paul Berman in an article in *The New York Times Magazine* in March 2003 titled, "The Philosopher of Islamic Terror." According to Berman, Qutb wrote that God had provided Moses and the Jews with the guidance, instruction, and behaviors that were required for man to live in harmony with both the spiritual and the physical world, without tension between the two. Over time, Judaism ossified and turned lifeless. God chose another prophet, Jesus, to introduce new reforms and a revival of spirituality. But Christ's followers and the traditional Jews clashed and argued, and as a result his messages became distorted. Most tragically, the early Christians had embraced the Greek notion of separating the physical world from the spiritual world—a separation of the secular and the sacred. This created, according to Qutb, a "hideous dichotomy," one that later led humanity to disaster.

In the seventh century, God again chose a new prophet—Mohammad—and provided a new set of instructions and codes that enabled religion to sit in harmonious ease within the physical world. In particular, he stressed that man should freely take charge of the physical world and not regard it as separate from his spiritual existence. This led to the emergence of the great early science of Islam during the Middle Ages, including the creation of the inductive method, which underpins all modern scientific inquiry and discovery. For several centuries Islam enjoyed leadership in the world until, beleaguered by conflict with Christians and other attackers and weakened by failure to faithfully follow the teachings of Mohammad, Islam could not take full advantage of what it had started. The powerful scientific methods it had initiated passed instead to Christian Europe.

Therefore, science and technology developed and flourished within a growing dichotomy between the sacred and the physical, with science on one side of a divide and religion and God on the other side—reason and belief pulled apart. This cleavage split humanity in two, dividing our need for God and the divine from our appetite for knowledge of our physical world. Thus, the "hideous dichotomy" introduced by Christianity led to a modern-world crisis in which material success resulted not in happiness but in despair, and anxiety and skepticism prevailed. The human race had become separated from human nature. Through their technological and economic dominance, Europeans then exported this misery across the globe.

continues

Qutb spread the blame widely. He blamed Jews, early Christians, European empires, America's support of Zionism, secularism, and Muslims who had accepted Christian errors. Only Islam offered a way of living in accordance with God's intentions; only Islam acknowledged the unity of the sacred and the secular and provided a path for mankind. Yet Islam was under sustained attack from other religions and even from within its own ranks; these enemies sought nothing less than to exterminate it. To prevail, Islam had to respond. Qutb set out a program, derived primarily from the experiences of Mohammad, which included a phase of withdrawal from the world, a period of preparation, and then an offensive phase attacking the enemies of Islam. "To the end…Qutb himself remained an ideologue rather than an agitator," Karen Armstrong wrote in *The Battle for God*. But Al Qaeda is in some important measure a direct legacy of his philosophy.

Islamic fundamentalism has developed upon a core philosophy not fully understood by those it challenges. But, crucially, it is the broader context of many Islamic nations that has fueled its growth: five centuries of relative economic, scientific, and technological decline; a recent history of occupation and subjugation by the empires of Europe; in some states, the imposition of alien, secular approaches to governance by elites that have not shared power and have often not shared the benefits of modernity; a demographic swell of young men in Middle Eastern countries, with stagnant economies providing few opportunities; unresolved tension and conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors and between Pakistan and India; an infrastructure of education, especially the madrasas of Pakistan and Afghanistan, that promotes fundamentalist beliefs; the prolonged and much resented Soviet occupation of Afghanistan; and a growing mistrust of the U.S., widely regarded as a nation attempting to impose an insidious and profoundly unwelcome form of imperialism. Hence, the combustible combination of inflammatory ideas and people eager to adopt them that emerged in the last two decades of the last century and that will undoubtedly help shape the first decades of this new one.

Christian Missionaries Heading to Europe

Christian missionaries from South America and Asia are at work in the United Kingdom, attempting to spread the gospel and convert secular Europeans to forms of evangelical Christianity. In 2001, about 1,500 missionaries from 50 countries were believed to be operating in churches in Britain, attempting to reinvigorate fading parishes.

Source: "Missionaries Flock to Britain to Revive Passion for Church," *The Daily Telegraph*, January 18, 2001.

The challenges posed by a rise in this tension between secular and sacred are complex and perplexing. To be sure, the heaviest burden must be carried by the majority of people in the Islamic world—people who seek harmonious and mutually beneficial relationships with the rest of the world while promoting the essence of their great religion. But they must be helped by the West, especially by the U.S. Frankly, this will require a greater sophistication of thought, word, and deed in the West than has so far been in evidence in the years following September 2001. The responses to date have included a "hearts and minds" campaign in the Islamic world, run like a corporate marketing program, to "re-brand" America in the Islamic world. Unfortunately, the authenticity of this campaign was undermined by other key signals from the U.S., including the unhelpful rhetoric of "good versus evil" and the repeated assertions that the U.S. has embarked upon a divinely ordained mission.

When Jerry Falwell proclaimed that September 11, 2001, was "God's punishment" of the U.S. for its secular ways, he was inadvertently speaking in the language of the hijackers. When President Bush talked of a "crusade" (a comment he later withdrew), he clearly did not realize the inflammatory nature of that phrase. The continued use of terms such as "evil-doers," coupled with attempts to push the margins of legality in the detention and treatment of prisoners, have created a dangerous atmosphere. This arguably helped create the conditions for the events at Abu Ghraib, which shook even the U.S.'s champions. The United States has never had a greater need to learn and demonstrate cultural competence in a fraught world. In dealing with Islamic fundamentalism's threats and violence, it must learn to step carefully back from its own tendencies in that direction.

U.S. Fundamentalism

- 59 percent of Americans believe the events in the Book of Revelations will come true.
- 17 percent believe the end of the world will happen in their lifetime.
- 45 percent of Americans believe in strict creationism and only 35 percent in evolution.
- Americans are twice as likely to believe in the devil (70 percent) than in evolution.

Source: Gallup polls conducted in May 2004 and November 2004.

Christian Fundamentalism

Indeed, while confronting the challenges of religious extremism, attention should not be focused solely on Islam. Though they have garnered much less attention, much stricter forms of Christianity are emerging, particularly in the developing world. A survey by Philip Jenkins in the *Atlantic Monthly* in October 2002 reported that the rising popularity of Christian faiths in the poorer regions of the world is likely to transform their relationship with the developed world in the next quarter century. In Africa, Latin America, and Asia, Pentecostalism is growing rapidly; so are stricter forms of Protestantism and less-tolerant forms of Catholicism. In his survey, Jenkins notes that "African and Latin American churches tend to be very conservative on issues such as homosexuality and abortion," in contrast to the far more liberal attitudes in many "northern" churches. The stage is set for significant schisms within the Christian faith, the largest faith in the world.

The drift toward fundamentalism in Christianity is not confined to the developing world, however. A similar dynamic is underway in the U.S., perhaps most dramatically illustrated by the spectacular popularity of the Left Behind book series—11 novels about the lives of people "left behind" after the sudden, apocalyptic disappearance of millions of Christians. Described by Salon.com as "a Tom Clancy-meets-Revelation saga of the Rapture, the Tribulation, and presumably, the eventual return of Jesus," more than 60 million copies of the Left Behind books have been sold. *Time* magazine estimates that only half of Left Behind readers are evangelical Christians.

Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ"

- Earned more than $370 million at the North American box office, making it the top-grossing R-rated movie of all time
- Made $239 million in overseas theaters, so that worldwide gross in theaters = $609 million
- DVD sales of the film topped $4.1 million in a single day; the editor in chief of *DVD Exclusive* predicted that sales of the "Passion" DVD would ultimately reach between 15 million and 18 million copies, generating as much as $400 million

Source: Box Office Mojo, CNN Money.

Another Path to the Sacred—The Rise of Spirituality

There is another, quite different "sacred" response to global modernity on the rise today: neo-spirituality. Known for its embrace of inclusiveness, holism, and tolerance, neo-spirituality most commonly manifests itself in New Age world-affirming philosophies, the revival of Eastern religious practices and traditions, and the growth in psychotherapy and human potential that has emerged since the 1960s, especially in Europe and the U.S. These various forms of spirituality are often referred to as "self-religions" because, as Steve Bruce argues, "New Agers believe that the self is divine or, if it is not yet, then it can become so with the right therapy, ritual, or training." In *Holistic Revolution*, William Bloom, one of Britain's leading holistic teachers and practitioners, argues that the rise of this phenomenon is in part a consequence of an increasingly modern, secular world. "A planetary culture of free-flowing information is absolutely bound to manifest new ways of enquiring into meaning. This is to be applauded. It is liberating and deeply democratic," Bloom writes. "It encourages and empowers people to taste around until they find those pieces of the jigsaw that fit their character and temperament."

Spirituality is born of the same impulse that fuels more traditional religion and fundamentalism: a belief that a deeper level of reality can be perceived and a more profound wisdom discovered. But spirituality resides at the opposite end of the cultural spectrum from fundamentalism, attracting those who are drawn to a journey of discovery and growth, to

a postmodern perspective of multiple truths, to finding new questions rather than more certain answers, and to learning and experimenting rather than subscribing to a rigid set of infallible and static givens.

These amorphous, fluid, and increasingly democratic characteristics make it difficult to pinpoint and analyze neo-spirituality as a "movement." As pointed out by U.S. social researchers Paul Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson, who have studied at length this modern turn toward living a more spiritual and ethical life, the many millions of people pursuing this path are largely hidden from mainstream political or religious analysis because their beliefs are multifaceted and difficult to categorize. But even if neo-spirituality is not an easily defined movement, it is certainly a powerful trend. In the U.S. today, one of the fastest growing religious groups comprises people who classify themselves in census returns as "nones"—those who do not subscribe to any particular branch of religious belief yet are not atheistic. Their ranks in the U.S. have doubled in the last decade, to around 30 million. In the UK (where *Cosmopolitan* magazine has recently appointed a "spirituality editor"), a 2000 survey by David Hay and Kate Hunt found that 76 percent of people acknowledged having had a religious or spiritual experience—far more than belong to and participate in churches. In China, Falun Gong, an integrative practice that incorporates Buddhist and Taoist principles with body and mind exercise and healing techniques, claims 100 million members; that is 40 million more people than belong to the Chinese Communist Party. Threatened, the Chinese government has denounced Falun Gong as a dangerous "cult" that "under the pretense of religion, kindness, and being nonpolitical, participates in political activities," and has declared it illegal.

Looking forward, we can anticipate two likely neo-spiritual dynamics in the coming decade. First, neo-spirituality will likely continue to integrate and align Western and Eastern philosophies and practices and draw heavily from self-improvement methodologies. The popularity of yoga, meditation, holistic medicine, and alternative therapies continues to rise. Roughly 16.5 million Americans now practice yoga regularly, an increase of 43 percent since 2002, according to research by *Yoga Journal* magazine. Americans spend $27 billion annually on alternative medicine, and 88 percent believe in its efficacy. One study in the early 1990s found that New Agers represent 20 percent of the population, and are the third largest religious group in the U.S.

The second dynamic we are likely to see is the integration of spiritual and religious belief with deep concern for the physical environment. Groups within mainstream Christian and Jewish religions are already moving in this direction, as seen in such nascent movements as "What Would Jesus Drive?" and "Rabbis for the Redwoods." And there is growing evidence that evangelical are "going green"; in October 2004, leaders of the National Association of Evangelicals, which has 30 million members, adopted an "Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility," proclaiming that it is every Christian's duty to preserve and protect the planet. This convergence might even fuel a resurgence of Gaia-like concepts and belief systems. The Gaia theory, developed by James Lovelock, suggests that the Earth be viewed as a coherent system of life, self-regulating and behaving as if it were a superorganism made up from all living things and their material environment. "We now see that the air, the ocean, and the soil are much more than a mere environment for life; they are a part of life itself," Lovelock writes.

Fundamentalism and spirituality, then, represent two extremes of the re-emerging sacred: one a reversion from modernity to traditionalism, the other a struggling journey into postmodernity. The more established conventional religions will find themselves increasingly squeezed and threatened by these two flanks. Meanwhile, the assumptions of a dominant secular worldview may be seriously undermined. It is likely indeed that the tension between the sacred and the secular will play out in several interesting and different ways. The West will need to learn how to combat Islamic extremism without fueling it. Muslim nations like Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq will struggle to find a balance between Islam and the secular structures of the modern world in order to define their own futures. The environmentalist movement will struggle to express its spiritual intuitions about the nature of nature and our place in the world within a secular worldview. And our organizations and institutions, born and matured in an era of deep secularism, will need to learn how to align with the growing desire—indeed, insistence—of the sacred world, in its many manifestations, to reintegrate with and help shape modern society.

The tension between the secular and scared worldviews—and, in particular, between different sacred belief systems—seems set to be an important source of political and social strife in the coming decade. Therefore, it will contribute to the growing dilemmas about the optimal projection of power in a volatile world, as well as to the growing sense of threat and vulnerability. The next dynamic tension explores these issues.