

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN SECULARITY?

The first thing to be said about this paper is that it does not propose to answer the question placed in its title. It will seek instead to formulate, and to explore somewhat, a series of other questions which must be asked before we can say not only what Christian secularity is but what the question about Christian secularity means.

There are at least four such preliminary questions which may be asked:

First: how is the contemporary issue of Christian secularity related, historically and systematically, to other cognate issues?

Secondly: how may the pair, "secular-sacred" be related to other similar pairs?

Thirdly: what are some possible working notions of such key terms as secular, sacred, secularism, secularization, secularity?

Fourthly: may Christological terminology be fruitfully employed to categorize different positions or tendencies on the issue of Christian secularity?

Finally, while this paper does not offer any theory of Christian secularity, it will conclude with a few statements which could possibly form part of such a theory.¹

¹ The following are some books and articles dealing with our theme: C. Armstrong, "Christianity Without Religion," *New Theology* No. 2, New York, 1965, pp. 17-27; A. Auer, "The Changing Character of the Christian Understanding of the World," in: *The Christian and the World: Readings in Theology*, New York, 1965, pp. 3-44; idem, "Kirche und Welt," in *Mysterium Kirche in der Sicht der theologischen Disziplinen* (ed. F. Holböck & T. Sartory), Salzburg, 1962 vol. 2, pp. 479-570; idem, art. "Säkularisierung," *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* 9, 253-254; J. Baillie, *What Is Christian Civilization*, New York, 1945; D. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, (paperback edition), New York, 1965; idem, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (paperback edition), New York, 1962; N. Brox & H. Schlette, art. "Welt," *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe* 2, 822-834; A. Brunner, "Die unvollendbare Welt," *Stimmen der Zeit* 147 (1950-1951) 321-332; M.-D. Chenu, "Consecratio Mundi," in: *The Christian and the World: Readings in Theology*, New York, 1965, pp. 161-177; Y. Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, Westminster, Md., 1957; J. Connolly, *Human History and the Word of God: The Christian Meaning of History in Contemporary Thought*, New York, 1965; H. Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective*, New York, 1965; idem, "Secularization and the Secular

I

Our first question: how is the contemporary issue of Christian secularity related, historically and systematically, to other cognate issues? Without attempting a complete answer to this question, it

Mentality: A new Challenge to Christian Education," *Religious Education* 61 (1966) 83-87 (the rest of the issue is devoted to a symposium by several critics of this essay and the author); F. Delekat, *Über den Begriff der Säkularisation*, Heidelberg, 1958; G. Ebeling, "The Non-religious Interpretation of Biblical Concepts," *Word and Faith*, Philadelphia, 1963; M. Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane: The Nature of Religion*, New York, 1957; idem, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, New York, 1958; W. Fennell, "The Theology of True Secularity," in: *New Theology*, No. 2, New York, 1965, pp. 28-38; N. Ferré, *Christianity and Society*, New York, 1950; F. Gogarten, *Der Mensch zwischen Gott und Welt*, Stuttgart, 1956, especially 134-167; idem, *Verhängnis und Hoffnung der Neuzeit. Die Säkularisierung als theologische Problem*, Stuttgart, 1953; idem, *Die Kirche in der Welt*, Heidelberg, 1948; W. Hartmann, art. "Säkularisierung," *Evangelisches Kirchenlexicon* 3, 768-773; H. Kraemer, art. "Säkularismus," *ibid.* 773-776; G. Lanczkowski, art. "Saeculum," *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 5, 1279-1280; A. van Leeuwen, *Christianity in World History. The Meeting of the Faiths of East and West*, New York, 1965; K. Löwith, *Meaning in History*, Chicago, 1950; H. Lübke, *Säkularisierung. Geschichte eines ideenpolitischen Begriffs*, Freiburg-Munich, 1965; *Lumière et Vie* 14 (1965) n.73 (entire issue devoted to theme); E. Mascall, *The Secularization of Christianity*, London, 1965; B. Meland, *The Realities of Faith. The Revolution of Cultural Forms*, New York, 1962, esp. pp. 41-72; J. Metz, "A Believer's Look at the World," in *The Christian and the World. Readings in Theology*, New York, 1965, pp. 68-100; idem, "Die Zukunft des Glaubens in einer hominisierten Welt," *Hochland* 56 (1964) 377-391; P. Micklem, *The Secular and the Sacred. An Enquiry into the Principles of a Christian Civilization* (Bampton Lectures for 1946), London, 1948; D. Munby, *The Idea of a Secular Society and Its Significance for Christians*, London, 1963; K. Rahner, "World History and Salvation History," in *The Christian and the World. Readings in Theology*, New York, 1965, pp. 45-67; A. M. Ramsey, *Sacred and Secular. A study in the Other-worldly and This-worldly Aspects of Christianity* (The Holland Lectures for 1964) New York, 1965; C. Ratschow, art. "Säkularismus," *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 5, 1288-1296; S. Reicke, art. "Säkularisation," *ibid.* 1280-1288; T. Rentdorff, "Säkularisierung als theologisches Problem," *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie*, 1962, 318-339; E. Schillebeeckx, "The Church and Mankind," in: *The Church and Mankind (Concilium. Dogma, volume 1)* Glen Rock, N.J., 1965, pp. 68-101; H. Schlette, "Wie bewerten wir die Säkularisierung?" *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 50 (1966) 72-88; O. Semmelroth, "Die Welt als Raum der Begegnung mit Gott," *Stimmen der Zeit* 157 (1955-1956) 444-455; R. G. Smith, *Secular Christianity*, London, 1966; M. Stallmann, *Was ist Säkularisierung*, Tübingen, 1960; P. Van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (paperback edition), New York 1966; R. Völkl, *Christ und Welt nach dem Neuen Testament*, Würzburg, 1961; H. Walz, "Christendom in a Secularized

may be helpful, first, to provide some historical background, and, secondly, to make a few remarks of a systematic nature.²

The historical basis of the secularization of Western society has been variously placed, in the political, scientific, technological and political revolutions of modern times, in the Renaissance and Reformation, in certain medieval currents such as St. Thomas' departure from Augustinianism, and even, according to a view popular today, in the biblical revelation itself. We are not concerned with this vast history, but only with certain phases of the explicitation of the theme of secularization in the last century or so.

The terminology of secularism and secularization begins to occur, with notable frequency and in a cultural context, in the nineteenth century in England, France and Germany.³ In 1846, George Holyoke founded in London "The Secular Society," and eight years later described its philosophy in a work entitled: *Secularism, the Practical Philosophy of the People*. Agnostic rather than atheistic, at least in its early years, this movement was a call to seek progress and social welfare according to principles taken from this world rather than on the basis of religious faith. During the same period, the French philosopher Victor Cousin and his circle were speaking of the secularization of philosophy and of the state. Partly due to these currents in France and England, Friedrich Jodl in Germany in 1889 advocated the secularization of philosophy, and in 1892 there was

World," *The Ecumenical Review* 10 (1957-1958) 277-285; C. Weizsäcker, *The Relevance of Science. Creation and Cosmogony* (Gifford Lecture 1959-1960), New York, 1964; C. West, "What It Means to be Secular," *Christianity and Crisis*, July 12, 1965, pp. 147-149; B. Wicker, "Secular Christianity," *New Blackfriars* 47 (1966), 412-421; G. Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church* (paperback), Philadelphia, 1962, especially pp. 17-36; G. Winter, *The New Creation as Metropolis*, New York, 1963, especially pp. 34-64; F. Wulf, "Der Christ und die Gestalt der heutigen Welt," *Geist und Leben* 28 (1955) 117-133.

² We are not now concerned with the canonical concept of secularization of religious in accordance with canon 640 of the Code of Canon Law. Nor are we concerned with the juridical concept of secularization as the assumption by the civil power, through seizure (just or unjust) or by agreement, of church property and other rights and privileges. Secularization as pertaining to the theme of Christian secularity is rather a cultural, historical, sociological, philosophical and theological idea.

³ For the following history see especially: Smith, *op. cit.* pp. 141-193; Lübke, *op. cit.*

founded "The German Society for Ethical Culture," counterpart of the society founded in New York in 1876 by Felix Adler; it sought a morality independent of religious premises, and politically, separation of church and state.

In the early decades of the present century, the concept of secularization was taken up by sociologists, cultural historians and theologians, notably in their analyses of the relationship between Christianity, especially in its Protestant form, and modern capitalistic, technological society. Max Weber's famous thesis on the connection between Puritan Calvinism and capitalism touched off a discussion which has continued to our own times.⁴

Between the first world war and 1950 or so, the Christian churches registered a deep concern over the threat represented by modern secularism. Popes and bishops delivered pastoral warnings on this theme, and many of us can remember secularism as a favorite communion breakfast topic a few decades ago. Similar concern was shown among Protestants.⁵

But even during this period, some Christian thinkers were preparing a quite different response to secularism, a response that would go beyond that of the social encyclicals, or of such movements among Protestants as the Social Gospel.⁶ While not embracing secularism itself, it would concede to it a good deal of its claim. Jacques Maritain's *True Humanism*, first published in 1936, was a pioneer

⁴ A good introduction to this discussion, with selected essays by Weber, Troeltsch, Tawney, Fanfani and others, may be found in Robert W. Green (ed.), *Protestantism and Capitalism. The Weber Thesis and its Critics*, Boston, 1959. For Lutheranism's contribution see K. Holl, *The Cultural Significance of the Reformation*, New York, 1959.

⁵ A prominent example on the Catholic side was the annual statement of the hierarchy of the United States for 1947. It was entitled "Secularism." For the text see R. Huber, O.F.M. Conv., (ed.), *Our Bishops Speak*, Milwaukee, 1952, pp. 137-145. The 1948 statement, "The Christian in Action," proposed remedies for secularism. See *ibid.*, pp. 145-154.

⁶ For a good summary description of the Social Gospel movement see R. Handy, art., "Social Gospel," in *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Grand Rapids, 1955, volume 2, pp. 1036-1037. The same author has edited *The Social Gospel in America, 1870-1920*, New York, 1966. Two works of the chief thinker of the movement have been published in paperback: W. Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, New York, 1964; *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, New York, 1960.

work among Catholics. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, particularly in his *Ethics* and in his *Letters and Papers from Prison*, called for a Christian acknowledgement of the adulthood of the world and of man, for a Christian respect for the penultimate, as he termed it, and for a dynamic understanding of the relationship of the secular and the Christian which would not make of them two separate spheres of life.⁷ In 1953 Friedrich Gogarten advanced the thesis that secularization as an historical process is not only not inimical to the Christian faith but has been made possible by it and is demanded by it.⁸ Secularization as an historical process, and secularity as an endorsement of this process, must be distinguished, in the opinion of Gogarten and others, from secularism, which is an absolutizing corruption of secularity. This thesis has since been taken up by an increasing number of writers, both Protestant and Catholic. Harvey Cox has been its leading popularizer in this country. Van der Leeuwen's recently translated *Christianity and World History* represents a major echo which will undoubtedly be influential. Among Catholics Johannes Metz is probably the leading spokesman.⁹

Such, in brief, are some of the historical preludes of the current issue of Christian secularity. Now let us look, also briefly, at the relationship of this issue to other cognate issues of recent decades. My suggestion is that in a variety of particular questions one basic question is being asked: how can two different spheres of man's life, one of which is the sphere of the religious, be kept in meaningful relationship to each another without dissolving one into the other or depriving either of its proper value, dignity and role in human life?

The question of the possibility and character of a Christian philosophy, for example, concerns itself with the proper activity of

⁷ Of the works mentioned in footnote 1, cf. *Ethics*, pp. 120-143, 186-207, 227-235, 320-331; *Letters and Papers from Prison*, pp. 161-169 and passim.

⁸ F. Gogarten, *Verhängnis und Hoffnung der Neuzeit. Säkularisierung als theologisches Problem* (see note 1). For summaries of his view see Smith, *op. cit.* pp. 151-156; Lübke, *op. cit.* pp. 119-127; S. P. Schilling, *Contemporary Continental Theologians*, Nashville, 1966, pp. 109-113.

⁹ See the essays of Metz mentioned in Note 1. Now may be added his essay in T. Patrick Burke (ed.), *The Word in History: The Saint Xavier Symposium* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966).

the Christian philosopher in its relationship with his Christian faith. Can the Christian philosophize like the non-Christian? Does he put his faith in brackets, or does the Christian revelation give to his philosophizing a distinctive quality by specifying it or at least conditioning it on the side of the subject? Can philosophy be Christian or is it a purely secular pursuit? If it is in some fashion Christian, how can it retain its autonomy and remain in fact philosophy, instead of becoming a form of theology?¹⁰

The question of the possibility and character of a Christian humanism also looks, in somewhat theoretical fashion (by comparison with the following question) at the compatibility of the Christian faith and revelation with the mentality which seeks the fullest possible development of man as man. An almost identical question is placed, in more concrete terms, regarding Christian culture and Christian civilization: Is Christianity in general, or in any particular form, congenial to culture and civilization in general, or to culture and civilization of a particular kind? Should Western culture and civilization at any stage of its development be denominated Christian, and in what sense?¹¹

The question of the theology of history deals with the relationship of general world history and salvation history, and asks if they are adequately or inadequately distinct, and if distinct, whether and how they are related to each other.¹²

Finally, the question (or the two questions) of church and state, and of church and society, places the question of the two spheres of human life in institutional form. Is there and should there be such a thing as a Christian state, a Christian organization of political society; what is or should be the relationship of the church as organization to political institutions in state and society?¹³

¹⁰ For a recent introduction and bibliography see M. Nédoncelle, *Is There a Christian Philosophy?*, New York, 1960.

¹¹ See the works of Maritain and Baillie listed in Note 1.

¹² See Connolly, *op. cit.* (note 1), especially 105-200 and, for the author's own view, 277-279.

¹³ *The Declaration on Religious Freedom* of Vatican II is a partial expression of the Church's position. For an interesting theological reflection on church and society, see N. Ferré, *op. cit.* (note 1).

No argument would seem to be needed to show that all of these questions are intimately related with one another, and that the question of Christian secularity is a new variation on the basic question involved in all the particular questions we have mentioned, and which we may summarily formulate for the present as the question of the relative autonomy of the human with respect to the divine. Surely the particular questions differ among themselves, though sometimes the difference seems to be one only of nuance. The question of Christian philosophy examines the basic question from the viewpoint of man's rational inquiry into the ultimate dimensions of the world and of human life; the question of Christian humanism from the viewpoint, perhaps, of the classic Renaissance and Enlightenment evaluation of the dignity of man as man; the question of Christian culture and civilization from the viewpoint of the historian and the philosopher of history; the question of the theology of history seems largely to have been placed under the influence of the revival of interest in salvation-history and in the historical dimensions of the Christian revelation; and the question of church and state and church and society seems to have grown out of the conflicts and tensions resulting from the gradual disestablishment of the church and secularization of state and society over the past several centuries. What the question of secularity seems to add to this last question is, first, a less institutional approach, and secondly, a more contemporary and revolutionary context marked especially by the emergence of widespread atheism in its several forms.

Though it would be unfortunate were we to blur the lines of distinction between these different questions, it would be even more unfortunate if we overlooked the basic question underlying all of them: the compatibility of God and man, the divine and the human. This has been the classic problem for theism, and today, in ethical and humanistic terms, it is the heart of the problem of atheism. "If God is, I am not; if I am, God is not." The temptation is to dissolve the human for the sake of the divine, or to exclude the divine for the sake of the human. In each of the questions I have mentioned, and notably in our question of Christian secularity, this basic question is implicit.

II

Our second general question is not identical with the first. It inquires about the relationship, not of issues, but of paired terms. Like the other parts of this paper, it offers more questions than answers; but this might not be a bad thing.

First, we might compare the secular-sacred distinction with two distinctions used by the scholastics: temporal-spiritual and secular-religious. St. Thomas, for example, distinguished the two *potestates, spiritualis* and *temporalis*, the latter being the equivalent of *saecularis*.¹⁴ Persons were also distinguished: the *secular* person in the Middle Ages was the one whose proper milieu was the *saeculum*, the world, in contrast to *religio*, the sphere of the *religiosus*, especially the monk.¹⁵ Our current distinction of secular and sacred, while in continuity with these medieval distinctions, is not entirely identical with either of them. Both of the medieval distinctions presupposed a particular and a rather fixed order within a hierarchized Christian society, whereas today the distinction of secular and sacred can have no such presupposition. It is made in a pluralistic world, in which there are many religions and many conceptions of the relationship of the two spheres of man's existence.

Next, we should note that the issue of Christian secularity is often placed in a more concrete and institutional form as the issue of the church and the world. The church is understood as either the Christian church in the sense of the whole spectrum of Christian denominations, or, especially among Catholic authors, as the Church of Christ subsisting in the Roman Catholic Church. When we speak of the question of secularity as the question of the church and the world, it is important that we not identify this question with the question of the presence of grace and salvation outside the visible church.

Perhaps the most important distinction which must be brought into confrontation with the secular-sacred distinction is the distinction of natural and supernatural, taking "supernatural" here not in the broad or improper sense of the transcendent or divine, that

¹⁴ See e.g. S. T. II-II, q. 60, obj. 3 and ad 3.

¹⁵ See G. Lanczkowski, art. "*Saeculum*," RGG 5, 1279.

which does not belong to the cosmic or created order, but in the proper sense of that which is beyond the powers and exigencies of human and cosmic nature in the actual world. Related to this distinction of natural and supernatural is the distinction between nature and grace.¹⁶

Since we have not yet sought to define the secular and the sacred in their relationship with each other, we may not yet distinguish the secular-sacred pair from nature-grace and natural-supernatural. For the moment we may speak hypothetically: if the distinction of secular and sacred has in it a connotation of the social, the historical, and even a suggestion of the institutional; if, moreover, it is a distinction peculiar to man's present state as *viator*, and as not fully redeemed, then we would seem to have these two grounds, at least, for not identifying the secular-sacred distinction with the nature-grace or natural-supernatural distinction. We shall return to consider the sacred and the supernatural shortly.

A further distinction, rather popular today, is that between the creational and the redemptional.¹⁷ This distinction can be understood in several ways, and what we say of it in comparison with the secular-sacred distinction will depend on the sense we give the former distinction. It may be taken on the plane of salvation-history: God has wonderfully created man and still more wonderfully redeemed him. Or it can be taken more ontologically, as designating two aspects of man's relationship with God who is source of man's reality as well as of his liberation from evil. In neither sense, it would seem, does this distinction coincide with the secular-sacred distinction, for the secular as such, as we shall see in a moment, would seem to point to a relationship of man to the world, and not, directly at least, a relationship to God, whether as creator or as redeemer.

¹⁶ Karl Rahner has pointed out that, while nature and grace are adequately distinct concepts, the natural and supernatural orders are only inadequately distinct, as part from whole, since the present order of salvation, which is supernatural, includes within itself an order of nature. See K. Rahner, *The Christian Commitment*, New York, 1963, pp. 39-41.

¹⁷ See K. Rahner, "The Order of Redemption Within the Order of Creation," *The Christian Commitment*, New York, 1963, pp. 39-74; L. Scheffczyk, "Die Idee der Einheit von Schöpfung und Erlösung in ihrer theologischen Bedeutung," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 140 (1960) 19-37.

III

If it is difficult to distinguish with precision the secular-sacred pair from other pairs, it is even more difficult to say clearly what we mean by the sacred and the secular, and to distinguish between the two in such a way as to make the disjunction an adequate one. Perhaps the following discussion will at least make it clear what some of the difficulties are. First, the term *sacred*. It has been notoriously difficult to define the sacred, from the viewpoint of the history of religions.¹⁸ It would seem to include, in its proper use, a reference to the divine (which, of course, itself calls for definition), and has this reference to divinity in common with the word "religious." But it would appear to say something more than the word "religious," in that it seems to connote a certain apartness, a certain withdrawal from the sphere of man's day-to-day life, through a consecration involving some kind of abnegation with regard to this world. Religion, as traditionally understood (not in the pejorative sense now frequent, due to the influence of Barth and Bonhoeffer), says simply man's personal relationship with God. It does not of itself have the connotation of apartness, self-denying transcendence of the ordinary, which the word "sacred" has.

How does "sacred" compare with "holy?" Here we meet a problem of language and translation. Leaving aside discussion of the biblical notion of holiness and of Otto's famous treatment of the holy, we might distinguish between the holy, or better, the saintly, and the sacred, as the French sometimes distinguish between *le saint* and *le sacré*. The distinction would roughly coincide with that between the religious and the sacred, in that sanctity indicates moral and even religious perfection without the connotation of being set apart by a self-denying consecration.

Is the sacred the same as the supernatural? There would seem to be a close affinity, but the conceptions are not identical. Both ideas, in their negative aspect, suggest a certain transcendence of the purely human, and in their positive aspect connote, at least, a special relationship with divinity. Perhaps we may say that the concept of the sacred is a vaguer, more phenomenological one and the concept of

¹⁸ See M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, New York, 1958, p. 1.

the supernatural more determinate and ontological. To the degree to which the element of self-denying consecration is conceived as connected with sin, this would seem to specify further the notion of the sacred, so that sacrality would not be present in any supernatural order, but only in a redemptive one like the present. This connection of the sacred with sin will be taken up in our final suggestions.

Next, the term *secular*, "*saecularis*," that which has to do with the *saeculum*, the world. Secular will have its meaning according to our understanding of "the world," and this, of course, is a very variable concept. We are not concerned here with secular persons, laymen and secular priests as opposed to religious, but with the *order* of the secular, that is, with the complexus of relationships which go to make up that sphere of man's life which is concerned with *the world*. By "the world" here I would understand those human institutions and relationships which have as their proper meaning and finality the total welfare of man in this life; the concepts of "secular" and "the world" as such prescind from man's relationship to God. This does not mean that God may not be present to man in the sphere of the secular, but only that the term "secular" as such does not express this presence.

The *secular* and the *profane* are often presented as synonymous. I would suggest that the secular may be most simply opposed to the religious, and the profane to the sacred. The latter opposition would seem to have in it a tension not found in the secular-religious opposition. Etymologically, the profane is defined only with reference to the sacred: it is that which occurs outside the *fanum*, the sacred place. This is not true of the secular, which, as such, says nothing regarding either the sacred or the religious.

In this light, would it not be preferable to distinguish secular and religious, rather than secular and sacred? The secular would cover man's relationship to the cosmos, while the religious would cover his relationship to God. Moreover, if the sacred does not apply to all that is religious or all that has the mark of sanctity or moral and religious perfection, but only to that which is marked with a special quality of apartness and self-denying consecration, then the secular and the sacred would not seem to be adequate to cover the whole life of man; there would be something which would fall between

them, namely, that area of men's relationship to God not marked with apartness. Would it be desirable to make our basic distinction between the secular and the religious, and then to sub-distinguish the religious into the saintly and the sacred? If we accept such a scheme of things, then it would seem that the profane, as opposed only to the sacred, would not necessarily be opposed to the religious nor co-extensive with the secular. There are difficulties of tradition, of nuance and connotation in all this, and the difficulty is compounded when we recall again that the word "religious" is coming more and more to have a pejorative flavor.¹⁹ I hope that what I have said on the basic secular-sacred terminology will have served at least to highlight the difficulty of achieving a language acceptable to all and free from ambiguity.

The *secular* and the *lay* are not identical conceptions, even though they are closely connected. Secular-religious and lay-clerical are, of course, the pairs which designate the twofold division of persons and roles in the church. One can be both clerical and secular, or lay and religious. But insofar as the layman normally pursues his Christian vocation in and through the world, there tends to be material identity between the secular and the lay. Historically the movement of secularization was at the same time a movement of laicization, since it was by reducing or eliminating priestly control of political and other institutions that the process of secularization took place.²⁰

It may be a little easier to say what we mean by secularization, secularity and secularism than to say what is the secular and the sacred simply. By secularization today is commonly meant the historical process by which human culture, temporal society and its in-

¹⁹ Where usage is so varied, an element of the arbitrary will almost inevitably be present in any attempt at a simplified and consistent terminology. One could make out a good case, for example, for giving to "sacred" the connotation of a more extrinsic and objective consecration, and to "religious" the connotation of a more interior and free consecration. The element of apartness in "sacred," and the distinction of the "saintly" and the "sacred" used here, are stressed in Chenu's excellent essay (see note 1).

²⁰ On the complexities of canonical terminology regarding religious, lay, and secular, see K. Rahner, *Theology for Renewal*, New York, 1964, pp. 147-183.

stitutions, the arts and sciences, etc., have achieved a certain relative autonomy with respect to religion, Christianity in its institutional form and sacral character, and have thereby attained a new and distinctive value in and for themselves. Secularization involves both de-instrumentalization and desacralization or desacramentalization. The secular ceases to be a pure instrument of the sacred—it is acknowledged to have an immanent finality of its own which gives it intelligibility and value. And the secular ceases to be, in some sense, sacramental, that is, a visible sign of the divine presence or of the transcendent destiny of man. The candle on the altar gives light, indeed, and it could not serve its function without giving light. But the reason it is on the altar is not to fulfill the physical necessity of light if the worshipers are to see. Rather it is there as a sign of God's presence and grace. The candle is in the realm of the sacred, the sacramental. But the lamp of the coal miner is not there as a sign of God's presence or grace; it is there to supply the physical need of man for light. You may say that a Christian coal miner may and should, occasionally at least, see in the light on his helmet a sacramental of God's presence and grace. Yes he may, and perhaps he should, but to the degree that he does so his outlook is one of sacramentality, not of secularity.

By secularity I mean the mentality which endorses the historical process of secularization and its end-product, a world which is not purely instrumental or sacramental of man's destiny in divine mystery. Secularity is Christian when it is the mentality of the Christian as such, who finds in the process of secularization, at least in its essentials, something quite compatible with the Gospel and even something fostered and demanded by the Gospel.

Christian secularity differs, however, from secularism. Secularism, while it does not necessarily deny the Gospel, considers that the Gospel is irrelevant to man's fulfillment of himself in this world. The autonomy of the secular becomes an absolute independence. Not only is secular reality not an instrument or sacrament of man's transcendent destiny; it is in no way affected by religious considerations. Secularism is not necessarily atheistic, though it may become an instrument of atheism. And it can, paradoxically, itself become a kind of religion, and can sacralize the secular by bestowing on

secular values the attributes of deity, making these values absolutes and ultimates which elicit an unrestrained consecration of man.²¹

We have been speaking of secularization, secularity and secularism in their more usual sense; what is being secularized or desacralized is the secular order itself. But the same terms can be applied to another very important process, where it is not the realm of the secular but the realm of the sacred which is the object of secularization. This secularization of the sacred can be more or less radical. In its more radical form it consists in the more or less total reduction of the sacred to the secular, so that the sacred ceases to exist as a distinct value in man's life. Perhaps Paul van Buren's *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* is an example of this kind of secularization. Statements expressing supernatural mystery are transformed to express a truth purely immanent to man. Thus,

the confession that Jesus is the Son of God says also that the freedom which the apostles gained on Easter derives from Jesus' freedom . . . the assertion of the divinity or Lordship of Jesus means that the believer no longer puts himself at the center of his picture of the universe, but is now at least to some extent for his neighbor.²²

In the liturgical life of the Christian, a radical desacralization would consist in so transforming liturgy as to reduce the distance between liturgical celebration and the everyday life of man to nothingness.²³

There is, however, a more moderate understanding of the secularization of the sacred. It may be understood not as a radical reduction of the sacred to the secular, but as the bringing of the sacred into more close and meaningful relationship with the secular. A possible example of this is the vernacular in the liturgy. A liturgy in which men are using for their worship of God the same language

²¹ The French Revolution's enthronement of the goddess Reason, or the rituals of Holyoke's Secular Society in its later history, are a few examples of this sacralizing of secularism.

²² P. Van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*, paperback edition, New York, 1966, p. 169. It should be noted, however, that Van Buren's understanding of the term "secular" is different from that given here. See *ibid.*, pp. 19-20, 193-194.

²³ On the need for an area of "celebration" in man's life, with worship at the center, see J. Pieper, *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, New York, 1952.

as they use in everyday speech would seem by that very fact to facilitate man's integration of his life of worship with his life in the world. One might ask in this connection if the return to the vernacular in the liturgy does not also, quite legitimately, perhaps, reduce the element of the sacred in human life.

IV

Our fourth area of exploration concerns the possibility and value of applying Christological categories to different tendencies or positions on the issue of secularity. The general possibilities regarding the relationship of the secular and the sacred would seem to be four, and it would seem that some traditional Christological terms are well suited to describing these possibilities.²⁴

In the first conception of the secular-sacred relationship, the sacred so dominates the secular that the latter loses its intrinsic value; becomes more or less a sheer instrument of the sacred, more or less a mere sacrament of another world. This was, generally speaking, the relationship of secular and sacred in the Middle Ages. Would not the Christological term, Monophysism, in an accommodated sense, be apt to describe such a relationship? In Christological Monophysism two dangers are present and sometimes yielded to: the integrity and relative autonomy of Christ's humanity is compromised, and so in the divine transcendence of the Word. Likewise in a sacralization of the secular order: the gods intrude into the marketplace with the result that they are less godly, and the marketplace less a market place.

The second possibility is akin to the first in that there is an excess of identity, and a deficiency of distinction, between secular and sacred. Only now it is the secular which predominates, and the sacred tends to undergo that radical secularization of which I have already spoken, tends to be dissolved in the secular or reduced to it. This absorption of the sacred by the secular may aptly be given the Christological designation of *kenoticism*, the term traditionally used

²⁴ A correlation of Christology and secularity is of course not new. See A. Auer's essay "*Kirche und Welt*" (note 1), pp. 516-518; H. Cox (note 1), pp. 111-112; P. Lehmann, "Chalcedon in Technopolis," *Christianity and Crisis*, July 12, 1965, 149-151.

for any view in which the divine attributes of the Word cease or are submerged when the Word becomes flesh. I have already mentioned Van Buren's position; it is perhaps a good illustration of this kenotic view of Christian secularity. To the extent to which Christianity tends to be reduced to standing with the neighbor for the achievement of a better life in this world, either by a total reduction of the sacred to the secular, or at least by a radical instrumentalizing of the sacred in the service of the secular, this kenotic tendency is present.

The third possibility is *secularism*. It leaves the sacred where and what it is but makes it irrelevant to the secular, which becomes in fact the primary focus of human concern and energy. None of the classic Christological terms seems to correspond exactly to secularism, but perhaps Nestorianism and, even more, Adoptionism, are the closest counterparts. In both cases an excessive dichotomy is placed between the terms of the relationship. The comparison fails, of course, in that neither Nestorianism nor Adoptionism went so far as to deny all relationship between the man Jesus and the Word of God, while secularism in its pure form asserts the irrelevance of religion to secular society. Nevertheless, for want of a better term for this alternative, Nestorianism and Adoptionism may be acceptable.

The fourth alternative I would designate as Chalcedonianism, for it would assert, between the secular and the sacred, a distinction in unity, a unity in distinction, akin to that which Chalcedon affirmed of the God-man. This position, like Chalcedon, would represent a *via media* between sacro-secular Monophysism and kenoticism, on the one side, and secularism on the other.

What is the value of such comparisons? They do more, I think, than provide a handy way of categorizing the tendencies in question. They can afford an important instance of that understanding of the mysteries of faith which consists in seeking the *nexus veritatum inter se*. Distinction in unity, or, to use the classic Trinitarian and Christological term, *perichoresis* or circumincession, provides a central conception under which the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Mystical Body (not only in the relationship of head and members, and in the relationship of soul—the Holy Spirit—and

body, but in the relationships of pope and bishops, bishops and clergy, universal and local churches) may be included. May it not be possible that the sacro-secular relationship can also be included in this unified Christian vision of reality?

Having said this about the value of applying Christological terminology to the relationship of the secular and the sacred, we must immediately point out the limitations of such a procedure, unless it is supplemented by something else. The achievement of Chalcedon was that it not only affirmed distinction in unity in Christ, but indicated on what level distinction and unity were to be found—unity on the level of hypostasis or person, distinction on the level of natures. Merely asserting that the secular is somehow distinct from the sacred, yet somehow united with it, is not enough. Some further understanding is required which will enable us to see and say *how* the secular retains its value and autonomy, while being significantly related to and united with the sacred. It is not the intent of this paper to undertake such a major task. A few observations must suffice. First, it should be said that when we speak of the secular and sacred we are speaking not of two things or two natures but of two orders of reality, each of which is a complexus of relationships between things having unity in the order of finality. Similarly, the unity of secular and sacred will not be, in any proper sense, a hypostatic unity but a unity of order. Secular and sacred orders will be related to one another and finalized towards the one integral goal of creation. Secondly, further understanding of the relationship of secular and sacred will need to draw upon philosophy. There is more than one possibility here. Maritain's *True Humanism* employs the Aristotelian categories of teleology: the temporal or secular has its own finality, and is not a pure instrument of the sacral, but an end in itself. Yet it is not an ultimate but a proximate or intermediate end. Thus there would be a relative autonomy of the secular order.²⁵ A second possibility would be to examine according to what concept in the system of Teilhard de Chardin this distinction in unity is understood. Still another possibility is suggested by Karl Rahner's application of a dialectical metaphysics to unity and dis-

²⁵ See Maritain, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 142-144, 169-171, 249-250.

inction in Christ, as well as by his understanding of reality expressing itself necessarily in symbol.²⁶

These are some of the questions which must, in my opinion, be further explored before we are in a position to say what Christian secularity is and what are its consequences for the life of the church. We need to refine our understanding of the basic concepts of secular and sacred; we need to relate them to other pairs, natural and supernatural, spiritual and temporal, and so on. And if we accept as the fundamental paradigm of relationships the Chalcedonian distinction in unity, the Christological *perichoresis*, then we need to bring to bear on the secular-sacral relationship a metaphysics which will help us to say in what sense secular and sacred are one, and in what sense they are distinct.

There are, in addition, several related questions which need to be examined, for example, the status and role of laity, clergy and religious in the Church with reference to the secular-sacral relationship. If the layman is characterized by the secular character of his life, what are the implications of this for clerics and religious as well as for the layman himself?²⁷ To what degree, if any, has the secular priest withdrawn from the purely secular and entered into the realm of the sacred? Is the traditional image of the religious as one who has left the world still valid and fruitful today?

There is also a very important ecumenical contribution to be made to our understanding of Christian secularity. Catholics need to know better, for example, how the Reformation is looked upon by many Protestants as a movement of secularization. We need to be informed on the differences between the Reformed and the Lutheran tradition in this regard. We are almost complete strangers, perhaps, to the way in which Orthodox leaders and theologians look upon the modern secularization of the world and of the church.²⁸ In the

²⁶ See K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, volume 1, Baltimore, 1961, pp. 180-183; *Schriften zur Theologie*, Band IV. Einsiedeln, 1961, pp. 275-312.

²⁷ "A secular quality is proper and special to laymen." Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, n. 31. "Secular duties belong properly although not exclusively to laymen." *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, n. 43.

²⁸ For an example see A. Schmemmann, "Problems of Orthodoxy in America. III. The Spiritual Problem," *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 9 (1965) 171-

dialogue with Judaism that is now opening up, the importance of the Old Testament understanding of the secular and the sacred is emerging, and the history of Judaism after Christ will undoubtedly be studied for its possible contribution.²⁹

Finally, in our analysis of the documents of Vatican II, we might ask to what extent the Church has endorsed the process of secularization, not only in the sense of acknowledging a relative autonomy of culture and the sciences, but in the sense of fostering a relative desacralization of her own institutions, especially with respect to the liturgy and the priesthood.³⁰

I said at the beginning that this paper would not propose any theology of Christian secularity, but would seek to raise and to some extent explore some of the preliminary questions which needed attention. I cannot resist, however, by way of conclusion, a few enunciations which could possibly be incorporated into a theology of Christian secularity. If nothing else, they might stimulate fruitful reflection on the part of others:

- 1) The experience of the sacred is the experience of divine mystery and hence possible only in a supernatural economy.
- 2) The distinction of two orders, secular and sacred, within the one supernatural order, will no longer obtain in heaven.
- 3) Moreover, it seems likely that the distinction of secular and sacred would not obtain in a supernatural economy independently of sin; or at least would not obtain to the same degree as in the present economy. Original sin, with its effects of mortality, concupiscence and ignorance, made it impossible for man to find God pacifically through the world as he had in paradise. The healing of sin through Christ leaves, in this world, the effects of original sin, mortality, concupiscence and ignorance; while these remain, there

193. Here secularism is viewed as the great obstacle to Orthodoxy's retaining its identity in America. See also 8 (1964) 172-185.

²⁹ For the importance of Judaism in the discussion of secularity see the symposium "Religious Education in the Secular City," in: *Religious Education* 61 (1966) 83-113.

³⁰ For the council's striking recognition of the autonomy of the secular, see *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, nn. 36, 43, 56, 59, 62.

remains the necessity in human life of a realm of the sacred and the sacramental, and the necessity of a self-denying consecration which involves at times a relative distancing of man from the sphere of the secular; there remains likewise, against the twin dangers of either idolizing the secular or despising it, the necessity of assigning it a distinct and relatively autonomous role in human life, along with a certain necessary and painful tension between the order of the secular and of the sacred.

4) The tendency in some today to dissolve the tension and distinction between the two orders represents the distortion of a fundamentally healthy instinct and realization: that the painful tension between secular and sacred was not God's original plan for humanity, that man's ultimate destiny is to triumph over every dichotomy between life in God and life in the world. This tendency becomes a deviation when it seeks, this side of death and the *parousia*, a perfect resolution of the dichotomy, or when it is unwilling to apply to its resolution the law of the cross. In our contemporary discussion of Christian secularity, it is essential that death and life after death be prominent.³¹

5) Liturgy is the principal area of Christian life where the immanence and transcendence of the sacred with respect to the secular finds expression. In the ever-changing rhythm of the church's life, it would appear that we are entering a period when, liturgically, the immanence of the secular in the sacred, rather than the transcendence of the sacred, will and should be accented.

6) The double distinction of clergy-laity and religious-secular is justified by the necessity of distinction and tension between secular and sacred in the pilgrim phase of the present supernatural and redemptional economy. The priest and the religious, in different ways, are called to a special consecration beyond the common consecration of baptism, and thus stand in a special way within the realm of the sacred, without, however, being obliged or permitted to divorce themselves from the attitude of Christian secularity, to which the Spirit is calling the whole church today.

³¹ For this new importance of eschatology see G. Schurr, "Why Bother About Life Beyond Death," *Christian Century*, April 6, 1966, 424-426.

7) While the distinction in unity between the secular and the sacred is an essential part of God's plan for the church on pilgrimage, the degree and forms of distinction will vary in different ages and cultures, as well as in individual vocations. The second Vatican Council and the currents surrounding it would seem to be moving the church, guided by the Spirit, to a more secular style of life, that is, not only to an acceptance of the progressive secularization of temporal institutions, but to a certain relative secularization of the life of the church herself. Though fraught with great risks, which must be met with the firm re-affirmation of the indispensable role of the sacred in human life, this contemporary movement of secularization would appear to deserve the support of all Christians, and whatever enlightenment theologians might be able to bring.

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