Who Put the "Secular" in "Secular State"?

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> Your hekura [spirit] looks dead and is tied to some poles. He has thorns stuck into his head. He doesn't look powerful to me. How can he attack your enemies if he is tied to poles like that?[1]

—Moawa, a Yanomamo man, on first seeing a crucifix

In this essay I hope to add an anthropological voice to the conversation about political Islam, one which seeks its context not in relation to some underdefined "non-political" or "traditional" or "pure" Islam, whatever those might look like, but in a rather more general consideration of the nature of religion and of politics. As Moawa helps to demonstrate, the standard Western understanding of genuine religion as a universe of calm personal devotion, universal harmony, and spiritual development is ethnographically exceptional and historically recent, even in Europe. Moreover, it obstructs our understanding of confessional violence in the modern world by leading us to believe that religion, in its essential core, is about individuals rather than groups, and about gentleness rather than force. For Moawa, the supernatural is a practical source of power which can be applied in violent political disputes, and he projects this assumption onto the religious figures of other traditions, just as we project the expectation that religion is essentially separable from politics, exclusion, and violence. I hope to show three things: first, that religion is, always and everywhere, an inherently political enterprise. Second, that all political projects have central symbolic and ritual di-

mensions, and thus cannot automatically be distinguished from religion either in their psychosocial foundations or in their ends. And finally, that "political Islam" as a label for oppositional or revolutionary groups blinds us to the more pervasive involvement of religion in the constitution of modern states, both in the Middle East and elsewhere.

My entry point will be a widely distributed discussion of fundamentalism and religious nationalism, R. Scott Appleby's article "Religion's Role in World Affairs: Challenges for the U.S."[2] The article is useful not only because it is a sophisticated and humane treatment of the subject, but because it reveals a number of basic and usually implicit Euro-American assumptions about the nature of religion, particularly the "high" religious traditions of complex societies in Asia, North Africa, and Europe. Religion, according to Appleby, is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, its ethical claims can be a guide to peacemaking, but on the other hand, its potentially unlimited capacity to elicit personal commitment can be a spur to conflict. "Fundamentalism," specifically, is a phenomenon of the latter sort, along with its cousin, religious nationalism. These two approaches to religion share a concern for arresting the moral and social decay of society, but differ in strategy: while fundamentalists hope to "restor[e] religion and religious values to a prominent ... public role in shaping culture, law, and social life," religious nationalists strive instead "to draw the circle of citizenship and civil rights tightly around the true believers and to arouse popular sentiment in favor of a constructed or imagined link between one religion and the nation."[3]

In public appearances, Appleby has elaborated on the distinction. Fundamentalism, he says, is sparked by the fear that religion itself is in danger, threatened by secular outsiders and compromising insiders. Religion, believers fear, has lost its hold on people, and the efforts of fundamentalists to strengthen the practice of faith on the level of the individual and the family will revolutionize public life. Religious nationalism, on the other hand, is a mixture of "nationalist fervor, folk religion, and low religious literacy, but high religious fervor," essentially a secular political project in which religious actors have become enmeshed, a struggle more about territory and secular politics than about religious concerns.[4] Both fundamentalism and religious nationalism are ideologies which take hold when civil institutions are weak, and both "reject genuine religious pluralism—the co-existence of different communities and traditions of religious belief... —as a violation of the divine will."[5] This sort of attitude appears to Appleby to be both wrong, and something of an aberration. Most Americans would agree that this kind of interaction between religion and politics is grotesque and upsetting. When the two intellectual categories appear to cross, as all too often happens in faraway places like Iran, Bosnia, or Saudi Arabia, we recoil at the mixing of what should be separate domains of life. "Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's," Jesus said, "and give unto God what is his."

This common-sense understanding of the essential separateness of religion and politics rests, of course, on our understanding of the vast differences between them. Politics, as we know it, is primarily about power. Power is primarily about the acquisition and the distribution of resources, whether these be human, material, or cultural, and the resulting ability to direct the activity of others. Religion, on the other hand, is about... Well, what is religion about? The past century of scholarship has produced little consensus, aside from the vaguest assurance that religion is somehow about a relationship between humans and the divine. What that divine is, and what the human relationship toward it should be, is maddeningly diverse. To cite just a few highly simplified examples from the anthropological utility drawer: The Navajo of New Mexico and Arizona practice a religion which is about healing, as all but one of the thirty-something Navajo religious ceremonies are meant to cure a specific patient of a specific disease. Ancient Egyptian religious practice was arrayed around rituals legitimizing the rule of Pharaoh, who was a descendant of the gods. Among the Trobriand Islanders of the Pacific, religion is about ensuring the fertility of yam fields and the success of oceangoing canoe voyages through the correct performance of magical spells. Traditional religious practice among the East African Lugbara aimed at maintaining friendly relations with one's dead ancestors, who are treated as vital members of the living community. For the Sambia of Papua New Guinea, religious practice is both about maintaining a lifelong antagonism between men and women, and about training fierce warriors and creating vital, heterosexual adult men through an elaborate set of ritual initiations which require the regular oral insemination of young boys by their adolescent peers. And in Moawa's Venezuelan jungle, Yanomamo shamans in drug-induced trances call the beautiful hekura spirits down from the trees and hills, "reeling and dancing, glowing as they come, fluttering around in ecstasy, like a swarm of butterflies," to inhabit the shaman's chest. From there he sends them to devour the souls of children in enemy villages.[6]

In the end, then, is religion about healing, about royal legitimacy, about subsistence and trade, about family and community solidarity, or about gender relations, sexuality, and war? What ties these diverse examples of religion together? On the surface, not much. But looking deeper reveals that each of these examples can be drawn together under a single definition most elegantly articulated by French sociologist Emile Durkheim more than eighty years ago: religion consists of a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things—that is, things that are set apart from the ordinary world—beliefs and practices that unite people into a moral community.[7] Of the three elements in this definition, beliefs, practices, and moral community, it is the latter two that prove most important.

When secular scholars first began studying comparative religion in the nineteenth century, they brought with them a Protestant tendency to see religion

primarily as a system of beliefs, doctrines, and dogmas. Religion was a world of ideas about the sacred, a notion which was itself an artifact of the twin textualist biases of literate Christianity and emerging secular scholarship. Shared faith defined religious communities whose primary goal was to create conditions in which individuals could nurture personal relationships with God. Where ritual practices appeared important, these were perceived by scholars as secondary to the concepts or myths that they appeared to act out. But by the end of the century it was clear that many religions around the world regard beliefs as altogether secondary, and emphasize instead the punctilious public performance of ritual duties. In the words of William Robertson Smith,[8]

> The antique religions had for the most part no creed; they consisted entirely of institutions and practices. No doubt men will not habitually follow certain practices without attaching a meaning to them; but as a rule we find that while the practice was rigorously fixed, the meaning attached to it was extremely vague, and the same rite was explained by different people in different ways, without any question of orthodoxy or heterodoxy arising in consequence. In ancient Greece, for example, certain things were done at a temple, and people were agreed that it would be impious not to do them. But if you had asked why they were done, you would probably have had several mutually contradictory explanations from different persons, and no one would have thought it a matter of the least religious importance which of these you chose to adopt.... Belief in a certain series of myths was neither obligatory as a part of true religion, nor was it supposed that, by believing, a man acquired religious merit and conciliated the favour of the gods. What was obligatory or meritorious was the exact performance of certain sacred acts prescribed by religious tradition.[9]

Smith, understanding the gap between this way of understanding religion, and that held by most of his audience, went on to say that

> [t]o us moderns religion is above all a matter of individual conviction and reasoned belief, but to the ancients it was a part of the citizen's public life, reduced to fixed forms, which he was not bound to understand and was not at liberty to criticize or to neglect. Religious nonconformity was an offence against the state; for if sacred tradition was tampered with the bases of society were undermined, and the favour of the gods was forfeited. But so long as the prescribed forms were duly observed, a man was recognized as truly pious, and no one asked how his religion was rooted in his heart or affected his reason.[10]

To be religious was to belong to a particular group with particular practices relative to particular gods. The sharing of abstract beliefs was unimportant. Instead, the correct performance of public rituals defined both piety and prestige within the community. Changing one's community therefore meant changing one's gods.[11] Apart from mere feelings of loyalty, religion was primarily a way of acting-in-the-

world—a model for reality rather than just a model of reality, in Clifford Geertz's terms. For most humans at most points in history, this has been the primary religious experience. To be religious meant to belong to a moral community, and thus to uphold the public and visible ritual, social and political duties which that community prescribed. Beyond ritual strictly defined, social practices related to diet, dress, marriage, and kinship—rather than theology—provide the everyday referents of religious community. Whether or not one eats pork, the color of one's trousers, and whether one allows a daughter to spend time at local coffee bars are often the most important distinctions between religious groups on the ground.[12] Religion's ability to naturalize such social conventions—to make them appear "uniquely real" and grounded in the cosmic order of things—is one of its sources of power in the human realm.[13] But in the sense of providing visible distinctions between groups, religions are little different from other sorts of identity complexes, including national or political ones. Michael Billig has labeled this latter phenomenon "banal nationalism," the apprehension of everyday objects, behaviors and symbols as national identifiers.[14]

These social conventions define the extent of the moral community and display for ordinary people what religion really is. Religious traditions, including those of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, create moral community in part by acting as fields of exclusion, not only defining those communities against outsiders, but organizing internal hierarchies of power. Certain segments of the population defined by age, gender, descent, occupation, literacy, or other qualities, are treated as naturally or inevitably subordinate to others, thus supporting the deployment of specific sorts of social and symbolic power.[15] Such stratification is inherently a political process.

Beyond this structural role, the psychological link between religion and politics is less about religious ideology's potential to motivate political action than it is about the ability of ritual in general to construct group loyalties. One of ritual's unique abilities is to overcome private intellectual differences and allow individuals publicly to signal consent to the reigning social order. This, according to Roy Rappaport, is the central feature of ritual as such, whether "religious" or "secular."[16] In contemporary Syria, for example, intellectuals, public servants, soldiers, and ordinary citizens cooperate in periodic bouts of public and hyperbolic praise of president Hafez al-Asad, behaviors motivated not by al-Asad's personal or political charisma, but by the self-policing of a populace who both despises him and recognizes the necessity of collaborating with his public leadership cult. That no one believes their own praises, and that all recognize that no one believes them merely makes the behavior more powerful, whether because it constitutes the ultimate social act in which private sentiment is overcome to accord with public expectation, or because it evokes a sense of personal shame at having become complicit in one's own oppression.[17]

Despite—or perhaps because of—the important role played by ritual processes in modern political and nationalist projects, during the historical development of the nation-state there has been increasing pressure on religious traditions to assimilate to the Protestant model that belief, rather than ritual practice, is the core of religion. In the nation state, "freedom of religion" is possible only to the extent that religion is held to be an internal, private and personal relationship with the divine, rather than a publicly manifested set of social, ritual or political duties. In the trenchant words of columnist William Safire, working to uphold a distinction between these two orders of reality, "Sin is private and crime is public."[18]

The process of emphasizing internal moral and spiritual growth rather than externalized practice as the self-evident core of religion has been important both in the recent history of European Christianity[19] and in European imperialist projects such as the British effort to revolutionize moral education in Egyptian schools during their four-decade-long Occupation from 1882 to 1923. Beginning early in the nineteenth century, British travelers, administrators, and intellectuals portrayed Egyptian religious practice as all surface ritual and no spiritual depth. In the words of a European observer of the 1830s, Islamic education

> turns principally upon the religious observances required by the Koran, and degenerates into extreme frivolity. Rarely is any lesson of morality given, and the passages of the Koran, which teach the cultivation of the virtues, are much less introduced and commented on than those which bear upon the ceremonials of the Mussulman faith.[20]

The differences Europeans saw between their own "moral" approach to religion and the merely "ritual" concern of Egyptians formed an important part both of European self-definition and of their strategic intervention in Egyptian religious socialization. Their solution was to encourage a "moralization" of religious education and practice such that sacred texts would become the source of personal ethical insight (carefully guided by official interpretations of meaning in mass-produced textbooks), rather than the source of publicly displayed status through their memorization, recitation, and display.[21] The new function of religious socialization was to create literate and self-reflexive moral subjects and to align their judgment with that of the progressive elements of the modern political elite. The role of indigenous religious scholars, for their part, became to produce scriptural justifications for programs of public improvement. I have argued elsewhere that anything that might possibly be called "political Islam" has its origin in this transformation of the religious tradition from one following historically ritual- and text-based rules of mobilization to one that was both centered on the idea of inner spiritual development, and at the same time harnessed to the discourse and

goals of modernist state policy.[22] It is at this point—and not in the development of contemporary religious opposition movements—that the contemporary link between "political" and "Islam" is forged.

From Indonesia to Morocco, millions of Muslims have grown up with this modern Protestantized view of religion thanks to the advent of state-supported mass schooling. Because of this, spiritual development and political socialization are often tightly linked, and thus the essential publicness of even an "interiorized" religious life remains and is constantly reinforced. Some pious Egyptian educators, for example, complain that parents send their children to private Islamic schools "because they want their children to grow up as good Muslims," but that sadly, these same parents "only stress the interior aspects" of Islam and let their daughters take off the uniform higab—modest dress in which the hair and arms are covered—after school.[23] Inner piety without the strength to display proper public behavior is a serious flaw, because although God can monitor inner intentions, God's community cannot. Despite this widespread concern among Muslim activists, the growing Western literature on veiling in the Middle East tends to conclude that "only a very small percentage of these veiling women seem to be actually turning to religion in a genuine way."[24] Resort to the language of "genuineness" here and elsewhere is based on the deeply held assumption that religion is a matter of interior transformation and private relationship with God rather than a set of social expectations. But in fact the act of veiling, whatever its individual motivation and spiritual consequences, is a religious act which contributes to the Islamization of public space, altering the social and cultural universe in which subsequent perceptions arise and subsequent choices are made.

> Islamic "fundamentalism" is a challenge to the moral leadership of traditionally trained religious elites supported by the state.

The challenge of "fundamentalism" in Egypt and elsewhere is a challenge not to civil society (because such movements are often one element of civil society), but a challenge to the moral leadership of traditionally trained religious elites supported by and allied with the state. The conflict is not primarily one of ideology, but one of personnel. Religious activists call on the government to enforce its own laws (since Islam is Egypt's state religion), while the religious elite calls for political quietism on the part of the populace, in order to maintain a monopoly on legitimate moral judgment. The battle between entrenched elites and the self-conscious moral beings created by new forms of education is about the social and personal expectations that define moral community. The Egyptian state as well as its opposition works to shape the future through the development

and implementation of religious studies curricula in public and private schools, the production of Islamic literature, and the use of violence where necessary to create the physical and emotional context of cultural perception.

Islam is not exceptional in this, despite the widely held belief that in Islam there is no division between religion and state, and despite statements by scholars like Appleby and others that "Islam is at a different point in its evolution than other traditions, [for] there has been no Reformation, no large, viable movement to withdraw religious practice from the realm of the political."[25] In fact, it has been argued that such a Reformation is now in progress as private interests seek to pull religious authority away from state institutions and toward new classes of educated laypeople. The violent manifestations of this transformation should make us think not of the differences between Islam and Christianity, but of what a bloody and unhappy time the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation was. Some scholars also charge that Islam's history and institutions make it more susceptible to political manipulation and violence than other religious traditions because its last prophet was a political and military as well as a spiritual leader, and provides a model for the application of violence in the name of God.[26] What is not usually recalled in such comparisons is the fact that most Europeans and Americans practice a religion whose history includes the story of a father willing to slit his son's throat at God's command, whose central symbol is an instrument of torture and execution, whose central event is depicted as a human sacrifice, and whose central ritual is an act of symbolic cannibalism. If this is not a tradition with an inherent capacity to lend itself to violence—either against others or against the self—it's not clear what is.[27]

If religion is inherently a political matter, then, what happens when the moral communities it defines are part of—if perhaps not necessarily coextensive with—state governments? What happens in these cases to toleration, pluralism, and religious freedom? And what happens when, in Appleby's words, religious nationalists attempt to "construct... or imagine... [a] link between one religion and the nation"?[28] The question is complicated by the fact that both "religions" and "nations" are dynamic and interactive cultural systems rather than distinct and self-contained objects. Benedict Anderson, in what is perhaps the most widely cited work on nationalism of the last twenty years, has defined nations as "imagined communities" in which individuals feel a "deep, horizontal comradeship" with each other, a sense of common descent, common experience, and common destiny.[29] The historical construction of all such imaginative horizons is clear, although the closer they are to us in time, the flimsier they appear, at least to the outsider. In dealing with Hindu religious nationalism, for example, Appleby repeatedly resorts to the idiom of "manipulation" in writing that "Hindutva" is an "identity fabricated out of bits of Hindu mythology, a nationalist ideology honed in battles against the Congress [...] party, and concepts and principles borrowed

from Western religions and from political parties of the far right." He presents the constructed nature of a modern Hindu-ness, "an ideology that employs the rhetoric and imagery of blood, soil, and birth," as unusual and particularly vicious rather than par for the nationalist course.[30] It is useful, therefore, to examine a case somewhat more remote in time, and by most accounts very successful indeed. The example of Turkey presents useful parallels and contrasts with that of Egypt.

In the Ottoman Empire, which ruled much of the Old World from the sixteenth through the early twentieth centuries, a number of different cultural, religious, and linguistic groups coexisted under the aegis of a Turkish-speaking Sunni Muslim ruling dynasty. In return for the payment of a special tax and certain restrictions on dress, occupation, possessions, and behavior, these millets or religious communities—Christian, Jewish, and Shi'ite—were allowed to practice their religions, were granted legal autonomy in matters of marriage, inheritance, and other personal status matters, and often participated to some extent in the machinery of government as well. Their religious leaders were considered to be the political representatives of their people, and during the period of Greek nationalism, the Orthodox patriarch even urged loyalty to the Ottoman regime rather than the Greek nationalist cause.[31] Whether such religious pluralism is "genuine" in the sense that Appleby approves is doubtful, but as historian Bernard Lewis has written,

> Toleration is... a relative matter. According to the principles professed by modern democracies, toleration means the absence of discrimination. In that sense, the old Ottoman Empire was not tolerant, since non-Muslims were not the civic and social equals of the followers of the dominant faith, but were subject to a number of legal disabilities. But complete toleration is new and insecure even in the most enlightened modern democracies, and there have been appalling lapses from it. . . . If we define toleration as the absence, not of discrimination, but of persecution, then the Ottoman record until the late nineteenth century is excellent. The well-known preference of the fifteenth-century Greeks for Muslim rather than [Western European] rule was not without its reasons. . . .[and] the movement of political refugees then was from West to East.[32]

Things changed only when Western European understandings of the nation-state— a state in which, in order to be a citizen, one needs ideally to be a member of some single ethnic, religious, or linguistic group—made their way into Ottoman lands. When this happened, according to Lewis,

> The material relationship between Muslim and Christian changed beyond recognition. Even the theoretical basis of association was gone. The old, mutually accepted relationship between Muslims and [protected minorities], conferring a definite and agreed status and rights on the latter, had been undermined and destroyed by new ideas and new ambitions. Liberal principles required the Turks to give the subject

peoples full equality of rights in the state; national principles entitled these peoples to rebel against it, and set up independent states of their behalf, supporting their claims both to citizenship and to secession. In these circumstances, suspicion, fear, hatred, and sometimes, we may add, the high example of Western European intolerance, transformed the Turkish experience toward subject peoples.[33]

When, in the early 1920s, Turkey fought to salvage its territory against the demands of the victors in the First World War, it suddenly became a country based not on Islamic imperial principles, but on a universal expectation of Turkish ethnicity. Its borders and identity became set, in part, by the transfer of millions of people across the new borders with Greece—an exchange of "ethnic" populations. What happened, though, "was not an exchange of Greeks and Turks, but rather an exchange of (Turkish-speaking) Greek Orthodox Christians and (Greek-speaking) Ottoman Muslims. A western observer... might even conclude that this was no repatriation at all, but two deportations into exile—of Christian Turks to Greece, and of Muslim Greeks to Turkey."[34]

Now, two strange things happened in the subsequent development of the Turkish state. On the one hand, the population of Turkey was on its way to becoming exclusively "Turkish" in ethnicity and exclusively Muslim—which is one element of Turkish ethnicity—in religion (whether or not Circassian, Kurdish, and Arab Muslims were to be Turks was still an open question in the early 1920s).[35] But at the same time, Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s embarked on a long and troubled road to becoming a "modern" and "secular" state, in which religious expression was seemingly pushed out of public life. Religiously significant dress was banned in 1925 for men, and a decade later, women were forced to remove their head scarves in public. Muslim religious schools were closed and the traditionally trained religious scholars who had formed the bulk of the old Ottoman bureaucracy were removed from ministries, from teaching posts, and from the court system. Islamic law was replaced by a combination of civil and criminal codes inspired by those of Switzerland and Italy. Polygamy was abolished, Muslim religious brotherhoods were prohibited from taking part in politics, and, in a final blow to Turkey's connection with the rest of the Muslim world, the alphabet was changed from Arabic to Roman letters. In turning away from public manifestations of its Islamic heritage, Turkey's new leaders were confident that in joining what they saw as the "modern" world, "There is no second civilization; civilization means European civilization, and it must be imported with both its roses and its thorns."[36] In speeches to the public, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, "Father of the Turkish Nation," emphasized the sense in which public displays of religiously significant symbols belonged to the past rather than to the future:

> Gentlemen... it was necessary to abolish the fez, which sat on the heads of our nation as an emblem of ignorance, negligence, fanaticism, and hatred of progress

and civilization, to accept in its place the hat, the headgear used by the whole civilized world, and in this way to demonstrate that the Turkish nation, in its mentality as in other respects, in no way diverges from civilized social life.[37]

In some places. . .I have seen women who put a piece of cloth or a towel or something like it over their heads to hide their faces, and who turn their backs or huddle themselves on the ground when a man passes by. What are the meaning and sense of this behavior? Gentlemen, can the mothers and daughters of a civilized nation adopt this strange manner, this barbarious posture? It is a spectacle that makes the nation an object of ridicule. It must be remedied at once.[38]

Note that these changes affected the external symbols of community that ordinary people often take most seriously as the daily core of religious identity, and which Billig brands the stuff of banal nationalism. Curiously, though, in banishing religious symbols and practices from public view, the new so-called "secular" elites were not removing it from politics; they were in fact placing religion at the very center of politics, as something to be tamed, managed, administered, controlled, and domesticated. The 1926 Criminal Code, for example, announced penalties for those

who, by misuse of religion, religious sentiments, or things that are religiously considered as holy, in any way incite the people to action prejudicial to the security of the state, or form associations for this purpose. Political associations on the basis of religion or religious sentiments may not be formed.[39]

Far from dismissing the importance of religion, the state acknowledged its overwhelming utility as a political ideology, and the overwhelming efficiency of religious institutions and organizations like the ancient Sufi brotherhoods as centers of political mobilization. In effect, the state claimed for itself a monopoly on the legitimate politicization of religion. Turkey's much-discussed secularism is in fact a top-down anti-clericalism based on the notion that modern educated elites should transform a "traditional" Islam characterized by public markers of community membership into a religion of individual interior development that could be harnessed to the national interest.[40] Basic necessities such as the training of religious functionaries who could lead prayers in mosques were handed over in 1924 to a Ministry of Religious Affairs, the purpose of which was "to cleanse and elevate the Islamic faith, by rescuing it from the position of a political instrument, to which it has been accustomed for centuries."[41]

What does this mean? What does it mean to "cleanse and elevate" a religious tradition by banning its most obvious manifestations in dress, in education, and in social organization? Primarily it meant that religion was now to be considered an internal matter, a question of faith and of personal worship, albeit worship guided by a centrally administered state religious bureaucracy.[42] It is impor-

tant here to distinguish between interiority and privateness. That religion was to become an inner psychological resource does not mean that it was to have no public significance. Instead, its becoming interior meant that its only visible expressions were those managed by official institutions. Political action motivated by non-state religious organizations was illegitimate, and the public performance of religious duties such as prayer no longer signified membership in a community; it simply represented an aggregate of individual parishioners expressing private faith at the same time. As in Egypt, the goal of interiorizing religious traditions allowed official institutions to guide inner development, in this case while maintaining a facade of secularism and indifference.

But it is certainly an odd sort of "secularism," where a government requires religious education in the public schools—as Turkey has since 1950—where the anti-communist efforts of the 1970s included the utilization of Islamic organizations, and where the market-oriented reforms of the 1980s required a recognition on the part of politicians that "state planning of religious and moral life was... the prerequisite for promoting a national culture that could secure unity of purpose and homogeneity of ideas."[43] In 1991 General Kenan Evren, president of the Turkish Republic from 1982 to 1989, explained the reasoning behind the state's interest in religious education:

> [R]eligious education cannot be given to children by every family. In fact, even if the family tried to do so, this would be improper since it may be taught wrongly, incompletely or through the family's own point of view. I asked you before not to send your children to illegal Qur'anic courses. Thus, we made this a provision of the constitution. In this way, religion will be taught to our children by the state in state schools. Are we now against the cause of secularism or serving it? Of course we are serving it. Secularism does not mean depriving Turkish citizens of religious instruction and exposing them to exploiters of religion.[44]

Because modern Turkey is a nation-state whose citizens share the qualities of Muslim-ness, freedom to be Muslim means freedom of belief (or of unbelief). But in turn, if religion is about belief, then public displays of non-official religious acts are by definition aggressive political activities that threaten the survival of the state. When a number of young female Turkish medical students wore scarves in their hair to examinations in January 1998, they were turned away and prevented from attending further classes. The rector of Istanbul University repeated its ban on head scarves for women, and an economics professor and administrator of the university remarked that "The head scarf is a symbol which represents an ideology... Many people who like to see the scarves would also like to see a regime like the one in Iran. That suggests a totalitarian approach which does not recognize any alternative."[45] Genuine religion, according to this theory, is internal; it is about faith. In becoming externalized, it becomes a matter of

politics, and is therefore by definition not religious. Somehow, the absolute ban on religious expression is perceived as a recognition of alternatives and a mark of freedom.

In the United States, too, we think about religion as having to do with private sentiments, emotions, and commitments. Religious freedom is defined as freedom to believe whatever we wish. We run into problems, however, when Daniel Berrigan and Catholic activists chain themselves to the gates of military installations or go further and break through fences to splatter nuclear silos with their own blood. We run into problems when Operation Rescue surrounds an abortion clinic and harasses patients, or when members of the Christian Identity movement threaten federal agents. We run into problems when members of the Native American Church are denied retirement benefits because they use peyote as part of their religious rituals, or when animal rights activists seek to have practitioners of Santeria jailed for sacrificing chickens to their gods. We take legal action when Appalachian Christians handle poisonous snakes as part of their worship and when David Koresh contracts a series of polygynous marriages with twelve-, fourteen-, and twenty-year-old girls. We run into trouble, in other words, in situations where religion takes non-standard public form rather than remaining entirely a matter of internal conviction, spiritual transformation and private communing with the divine. In encouraging Appleby's "genuine religious pluralism," the modern nation-state even of the most liberal sort can grant freedom to thought but relatively limited freedom to action.

> **Even the most liberal modern nation-state can grant freedom to thought but relatively limited freedom to action.**

In the end, the label "political Islam" as applied largely or solely to oppositional movements distracts our attention from the more widespread interminglings of religion and power on the part of standing governments. In nearly every majority Muslim country in the world—not to mention so many of the "secular" nations we in the West congratulate ourselves for—the relationship between these two seemingly separate cultural domains descends deep into the infrastructure of the modern state. This is obscured by the fact that the very image we have of what constitutes "genuine" religious activity is shaped by the monopoly of the state both on the definition of the national community and on the legitimate exercise of violence. In the Western imagination, religion is "genuine" (natural, healthy, non-pathological, normal) only when it remains interior and renounces both violence and the potential to constitute an alternative national identity. This is, it should be noted, an entirely arbitrary notion which excludes vast numbers of religious traditions around the globe and therefore hobbles our understanding of religion, of politics, and of culture. When the Venezuelan

government finally extends effective control over Moawa's Yanomamo people, its first act will be to suppress intervillage raids, stripping the hekura spirits of their utility as weapons and further encouraging the ongoing conversion of the Yanomamo to Christianity. The formerly autonomous community will then find itself merged into the "national" population, or marked as yet another impoverished minority ethnic group. The boundaries of their moral community shattered, they will be able to chew the flesh and swallow the blood of the God of their new nation and perhaps look at the bloody crucified Jesus in a new light—not as a failed hekura, but as an example of what happens when Caesar is not given his due. As we move into the next millennium, we need to learn how to understand religiously inspired political movements not as perversions of faith, but—whether we like them or not—as means of organizing communities, creating social stratification, and prosecuting bloody enmities that are simply different from the ones we are used to. ⓧ

Notes

1. Napoleon Chagnon, *The Yanomamo*, 5th ed. (New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1997) 225.

2. This article was included in the 1998 edition of *The Foreign Policy Association's Great Decisions Booklet* (New York: Foreign Policy Association) 86-96, distributed to participants in its nationwide "Great Decisions" public lecture and discussion series. It is important precisely because it was aimed at a general, educated and politically active audience rather than either to the public at large or to academic specialists.

3. Ibid., 87.

4. Davidson College, 27 September 1998.

5. Appleby, 87.

6. Chagnon, 117.

7. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1995) 44.

8. Smith was among the first to note this fact. A Presbyterian minister and scholar of Semitic languages, he presented these ideas on the ancient religions of Greece, Rome, and Judea in a series of lectures delivered at the University of Edinborough in 1889.

9. William Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (New York: Meridian, 1956 [1889]) 17-18.

10. Ibid., 21

11. When the Bible's Naomi was preparing to return to her homeland in Judah after the death of her husband, she pled with her Moabite daughter in law Ruth, "Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where though lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." (Ruth 1:15-16). Clearly Ruth was not interested primarily in the doctrine of the one God. Rather, her decision to leave one social group for another was driving her choice of religious allegiance.

12. Tone Bringa, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) ch. 2.

13. Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in his *The Interpretation of Cultures*,

(Basic Books,1973) ch. 4.

14. Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995); Catherine Palmer, "From Theory to Practice: Experiencing the Nation in Everyday Life," *Journal of Material Culture* , 3, no. 2:175-99.

15. Elaine Combs-Schilling, *Sacred Performances: Islam, Sexuality, and Sacrifice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); Donald Tuzin, *The Voice of the Tambaran: Truth and Illusion in Ilahita Arapesh Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) and his *The Cassowary's Gift: The Life and Death of Masculinity in a New Guinea Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

16. Roy Rappaport, "The Obvious Aspects of Ritual," in his *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books) 173-222.

17. Lisa Wedeen, "Acting 'As If': Symbolic Politics and Social Control in Syria," Comparative Studies in Society and History, 40, no. 3:503-23.

18. William Safire, "Stop the Erosion of Personal Privacy," *Charlotte Observer*, 29 December 1998, 9(A). Agreeing from the opposite end of the political spectrum, columnist Anthony Lewis wrote the next day that "breaking down the wall between private and public life is the hallmark of tyranny," "Old Probe and Partisan Hyde," *Charlotte Observer*, 30 December 1998, 13(A).

19. Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols* (New York: Vintage, 1973).

20. John Bowring, "Report on Egypt and Candia," British House of Commons Sessional Papers (1840) vol. 21: 137.

21. Gregory Starrett, "The Hexis of Interpretation: Islam and the Body in the Egyptian Popular School," *American Ethnologist,* 22, vol. 4: 953-969; Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

22. Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work,* 9-10.

23. Ibid.,181.

24. Arlene E. MacLeod, *Accommodating Protest: Working Women, the New Veiling, and Change in Cairo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) 110.

25. R. Scott Appleby at Davidson College, 27 September 1998.

26. Many "secular" western European governments—like England and Greece, for example, have officially established state churches, and others, including England and Germany, offer tax-supported religious education in public schools. On politics and violence in such "secular" contexts, see, for example, Charles Stewart, "Who Owns the Rotonda? Church vs. State in Greece," *Anthropology Today* , 14, no. 5, (October 1998): 3-9.

27. For discussions of violence and Judeo-Christian symbolism, see Carol Delaney, *Abraham on Trial: the Social Legacy of Biblical Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), and Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

28. Appleby, 87.

29. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983) 16.

30. Appleby, 92.

31. Stewart, 7.

32. Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968) 354.

33. Ibid., 355-356.

34. Lewis, 355. In Ottoman practice, millets were defined explicitly on the basis of religious identity. Post-Ottoman systems in some areas altered the official treatment of community or nationality. In the former Ottoman lands of Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, "nationality" was officially a secular identifier during Tito's rule, even though on the village level Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim populations perceived their religious identity as the defining feature of nation

status. Through the course of the 1980s, however, Serb and Croat nationalist intellectuals distinguished the basis of their nationality from that of the Muslims, arguing that Serb-ness and Croat-ness were matters of shared blood and common descent, whereas the Muslims, who defined their community on the basis of a shared environment, culture, sentiment, and experience, were an "invented people" who were actually either Serbian or Croat in their true national identity. Muslim-ness, defined as a matter of psychology and culture rather than shared physical substance, was declared to be less "natural" as a basis for nationhood. Tone Bringa, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way: Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) 30-31.

35. For the considerable complications in this process, see Selim Deringil, "From Ottoman to Turk: Self-Image and Social Engineering in Turkey," 217-26, and Kemal Kirisci, "Minority/Majority Discourse: The Case of the Kurds in Turkey," 227-248, in Dru Gladney, ed., *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

36. Lewis, 236.

37. Lewis, 268.

38. Lewis, 270.

39. Lewis, 412.

40. See Carol Delaney, *The Seed and the Soil: Gender and Cosmology in Turkish Village Society* , vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) 284, for the confusion that results from regarding interiority and privateness as identical.

41. Lewis, 264.

42. Which Ataturk also planned, but did not succeed, in changing to match the European ideal, with pews and liturgical music replacing prostration and chanting. See Lewis, 414.

43. Umit Cizre Sakallioglu, "Parameters and Strategies of Islam-State Interaction in Republican Turkey," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* , 28, no. 2 (May 1996): 245.

44. Ibid. 246.

45. Stephen Kinzer, "Culture Clash Flares Anew: Turkey again confronts divide between secularism, religion," *Charlotte Observer*, 18 March 1998, 2(A).