

Civil Religion and the Integration of Society: A Theoretical Reflection and an Application

Karel DOBBELAERE

In the sociological literature, three social functions of religion are clearly spelled out: the integration of society, the motivation of role-players, and the provision of an integrative meaning system on the personal level (Wilson 1982, p. 33, pp. 49-52, p. 157). In this paper I will confine my discussion to the first function. According to Merton,

The large, spaceless and timeless generalizations about "the integrative functions of religion" are largely, though not of course wholly, derived from observations in nonliterate societies. Not infrequently, the social scientist implicitly adopts the findings regarding such societies and goes on to expatiate upon the integrative functions of religion *generally* (1957, p. 28).

He cites Davis and Moore and their study on stratification as an example:

No society has become so completely secularized as to liquidate entirely the belief in transcendental ends and supernatural entities. Even in a secularized society some system must exist for the integration of ultimate values, for their ritualistic expression, and for the emotional adjustments required by disappointment, death, and disaster (1961, p. 474).

Such authors, Merton states, neglect the possibly disintegrative consequences of religion in "multi-religion societies," and he questions the evidence that "'nonreligious' people . . . less often subscribe to certain common 'values and ends' than those devoted to religious doctrines" (1957 p. 29). Consequently, Merton suggests a possible opposition between religions and the societal value consensus in multi-religion societies.

The Emergence of Religious Pluralism in the West

In Europe, religious pluralism is an early consequence of functional differentiation. This differentiation of religion, politics and economy began already in the Middle Ages, continued in science and education in the mid-eighteenth century, and later affected the family. A differentiation of role systems and role-expectations developed between these different sub-systems. In modern societies, political, religious, and economic institutions became increasingly specialized in their functions and promoted increasingly rational organizations. This process led to a sharp "segmentation of the several institutional domains," and the institutional norms increasingly became functionally rational and autonomous within these separate institutional areas (Luckmann 1967, p. 95; see also Luckmann 1975). Consequently, the economy and the polity developed "secular" norms, which restricted the validity of the church's norms increasingly to the specifically "religious sphere," while its "global" claims were generally neutralized as mere rhetoric (Luckmann 1967, p. 95). This process of change has been called secularization.

The development of multiple relations between institutionalized religion (churches) and other specialized institutions resulted in the emergence of new religious groups claiming "doctrinal" superiority and a higher degree of "purity" from "secular" involvements (Luckmann 1967, p. 81). Moreover, the emergence of a polity emancipated from "the sway of either religious institutions or religious rationales of political action" prevented the churches from calling upon the state to enforce their claims of allegiance. This de-monopolization of ecclesiastical traditions also furthered a pluralistic religious situation (Berger 1967, pp. 129-134).

Religious Pluralism and the Emergence of Civil Religion

In a functionally differentiated society, the religions making up the religious sub-system could no longer legitimate the societal system. But, in the eighteenth century, a complete differentiation of polity and religion was still impossible (Luhmann 1981, pp. 297-298). In 1761, confronted with this dilemma, Rousseau tried to solve it by enunciating the principles of a *religion civile* (Rousseau 1943, p. 431). Its simple dogmas were the existence of God, the life to come, the reward of the just and the punishment of evildoers, the sanctity of law, and the exclusion of religious intolerance (pp. 428-429). Such a religion should promote "sociability, without which no man can be either a good citizen or a faithful subject" (p. 427).

In 1967, Bellah took up this concept and linked it to the Durkheimian idea of the unity of religion and society (Bellah 1967 pp. 5 and 19). In America, according to Bellah, civil religion is a well-institutionalized religion existing "alongside of and rather clearly differentiated from the churches" (p. 1). In his article, Bellah outlined the dogmas of American civil religion, which are akin to Rousseau's notion (see also Greeley 1972, pp. 156-174). They are to be found in the inaugural addresses of the presidents of the United States and in the Declaration of Independence. Reference is made to God, the Almighty Being, the Creator, the Supreme Judge and to Providence. "In these last two references," according to Bellah, "a Biblical God of history who stands in judgment over the world is indicated" (p. 6). Although much is selectively derived from Christianity, this religion is clearly not itself Christian. Christ is never mentioned in these documents.

The God of the civil religion is not only rather "unitarian," he is also on the austere side, much more related to order, law, and right than to salvation and love. Even though he is somewhat deist in cast, he is by no means simply a watchmaker God. He is actively interested and involved in history, with a special concern for America (p. 7).

Indeed, "From the Pilgrims on America has been conceived by some as 'God's new Israel . . . God's almost chosen people'" (Hammond 1976, p. 171). In other words America is equated with Israel; it is the promised land. And "With the Civil War, a new theme of death, sacrifice, and rebirth enters the civil religion. It is symbolized in the life and death of Lincoln" (Bellah 1967, p. 10), and later on, of Kennedy and Martin Luther King. This symbolism then found both physical and ritualistic expression, e.g. in national cemeteries and Memorial Day. Concluding his article Bellah writes:

Behind the civil religion at every point lie Biblical archetypes: Exodus, Chosen People, Promised Land, New Jerusalem, Sacrificial Death and Rebirth. But it is also genuinely American and genuinely new. It has its own prophets and its own martyrs, its own sacred events and sacred places, its own solemn rituals and symbols. It is concerned that America be a society as perfectly in accord with the will of God as men can make it, and a light to all the nations (p. 18).

According to Martin, it is the

explicit separation of church from state that enables a pluralistic religion-in-general to buttress the higher level legitimations of American society. Indeed, since religion has been set free to move

downstream with the ebb and flow of subcultural change (here, he is referring to denominationalism), it is more likely to provide generalized legitimations of a more apparently modern kind. Such legitimations must, of course, not only be general but vague. They must be above specific denominations (see also Greeley 1972, pp. 156 and 158) and specific institutional arrangements, whether these be religious or secular (Martin 1978, p. 70).

In fact, as Bellah mentions, American Civil Religion, “borrowed selectively from the religious traditions in such a way that the average American saw no conflict between the two,” and as a result America was never anticlerical or militantly secular.

Such an achievement is by no means to be taken for granted . . . One needs only to think of France to see how differently things can go. The French Revolution was anticlerical to the core and attempted to set up an anti-Christian civil religion. Throughout modern French history, the chasm between traditional Catholic symbols and the symbolism of 1789 has been immense (Bellah 1967, p. 13).

Martin explains the different evolution of America and France by referring to the different socio-cultural complex, categorized as “organic monopoly” (which is typical of Catholic countries like France), as against “individualistic pluralism” (which is typical in Protestant countries like the U.S.A.): “The latin pattern contains enormous pressures toward separation of church and state, of Christianity and civil religion, simply on account of the immense split over religion per se” (Martin 1978, p. 71).

Types of Civil Religion

The notion of “civil religion” emerging with Rousseau and consistently applied by Bellah to the American situation—elaborating on Herberg’s conceptualization of “the American Way of Life” as “the operative faith of the American people” (Herberg 1955, p. 88), i.e. its “operative religion”¹ (Herberg 1967, p. 472; see also Greeley 1972, pp. 156-174)—has been extended to other countries to include quite different types of so-called civil religious systems. Not only France’s anti-Christian version of civil religion is referred to. Parsons mentions even Marxism as a “secular religion.” In his opinion Marxian socialism “was the most important alternative to the American version of the civil religion” (Parsons 1974, p. 207 and pp. 209-210). And in England, “the established church,” according to Martin,

“could provide the imposing west front of civic religion” (1978, pp. 70-71). It is clear from these few examples that civil religion is not always clearly differentiated either from the state or the church. And it is exactly the type of functional differentiation between civil religion, the state and the church, which allows Coleman to point out “several type-cases of the forms of civil religion” in the course of religious evolution (Coleman 1970, p. 73).

In primitive and archaic religions there is little or no functional differentiation between society, religious organization and civil religion. A case in point is Durkheim’s analysis of primitive Australian society, in which he states that religion is the symbolization and ritualization of society. In historic and early modern cases of religion, civil religion remained undifferentiated, but religious and political elites and organizations have functionally differentiated from each other. In contemporary societies, finally, there are, according to Coleman, three forms under which civil religion exists: undifferentiated, with either church (e.g. Orthodoxy in Greece, Islam in Iran, and Buddhism historically in Sri Lanka) or state (e.g. State Shinto in Japan) acting as its sponsoring agent; as secular nationalism, of which Soviet Russia is an example, but there was also Turkey after Atatürk’s revolution; and differentiated, the American case, wherein civil religion is differentiated from both state and churches (pp. 69-75). The latter case is clearly functionally differentiated from church and state, and represents most fully Rousseau’s meaning of the term civil religion (Hammond 1980, p. 44).

American Civil Religion: An Empty and Broken Shell

American civil religion was initially formulated by the first leaders of the U.S.A. in the Declaration of Independence and the inaugural address of its presidents, by men like Adams, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson and Washington. They were inspired by the same ideas that influenced Rousseau, which were part of the intellectual climate of the late-eighteenth century (Bellah 1980, p. 4). On solemn occasions they are periodically reiterated, e.g. in the inaugural addresses of the late American Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, to lift up the people and to call upon them to take on the great challenges of our time—challenges that are often worded in the terms of Lincoln: “the great task remaining before us,” i.e. “to struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself”; to bring freedom and equality, not only to all American citizens, but to all the people of the world (Bellah 1967, pp. 1-5 and 13-14). In fact, the presidents of the U.S.A. want America to be truly a great example and a beacon of hope for the world. In his second inaugural address, Reagan has voiced it in these terms.

One people under God, dedicated to the dream of freedom that
He has placed in the human heart, called upon now to pass that
dream on to a waiting and a hopeful world.

But, “today the American civil religion is an empty and broken shell” (Bellah 1975, p. 142). The common moral and religious understanding from which the basic moral norms—liberty, justice, and charity—were derived, are, according to Bellah, eroded by the utilitarian morality of self-interest which is typical of the American society of today (pp. x-xiv). In *The Broken Covenant*, Bellah offers us, as he puts it, “an exercise in the analysis and interpretation of cultural meaning” and not “an explanation in terms of social and economic variables” (1975, p. viii). In fact, he does not offer us a sociological explanation: there is no explicit focus upon social-structural determinants. Although he mentions structural characteristics such as industrial capitalism, market economy, and bureaucracy, his analysis proceeds in cultural terms. Materialism, rationalism, the success ideal, technical reason, self-interest and other aspects of the dominant liberal utilitarian culture are offered as an explanation of the breaking of the Covenant.

The Decay of American Civil Religion Explained

Bellah’s hermeneutics of the American “sacred texts” (1976, p. 153) are supplemented by empirical research with an analysis of the civil religious consciousness of the American people, and of the support given to the civil religion theme by members of specific denominations. Wimberley and his associates asked among others the question “who is civil religious?” It is the religiously conservative, the least educated, the poor, the unemployed, the retired, the rural and elderly people, who are predominantly civil religious (Christenson and Wimberley 1978). In other words, those who are most active in organized religion are predominantly civil religious. This explains an earlier finding that civil religion “is not readily distinguished from church religion in the general population [in the same way] as it is among the religiously active” (Wimberley 1976, p. 350). Although Wimberley’s studies suggest “that civil religion may receive broad support,” those having graduate degrees beyond college, the professionals, the officials, and the ministers have the lowest score on the civil religion dimension (Christenson and Wimberley 1978). It seems then that civil religion rests rather on the masses than on the elite and those in potential power positions. This lends support to social historians, sociologists, and political analysts who refer to the use of religious symbols by national politicians as idiosyncratic or the “canny political manipulation of religious images for political gain” (Fenn

1978, p. 51). These data also lend support to Fenn's contention arrived at on theoretical grounds, that Bellah's conception of civil religion is a *mythic* perspective. It regards society as the really real, as the given. Fenn, to the contrary, opts for a discursive type of reasoning. He sees society as made up by conflicting and co-operative activities of classes, ethnic and religious groups, large corporations, etc. (pp. 1-23 and 42). "The civil religion is more likely to be seen as a cultural fiction to the extent that the nation itself seems to be merely an arena of conflicting and co-operative activities" of groups, quasi-groups, and individuals (p. 52), which is more typically the point of view of the elite. Their use of religious symbols consequently reduces civil religion to unauthentic rhetoric and must be considered "as a potentially deceptive form of communication" for all those people who do oppose and resist it (pp. 43-63). It is clear that Fenn questions whether America is "really real" as "a nation," and considers it as a composite of interrelated and conflicting groups, collectivities and individuals. Civil religion then is not authentic; it is the rhetoric of persons and groups concealing their partial interests.

With Fenn we move to a more social-structural explanation of the "broken covenant." But it seems to me that the major change that has occurred since the mid-eighteenth century is a more consistently and thoroughly functional differentiation of Western societies and the rationalization of the component sub-systems. In most of these sub-systems organizations developed (e.g. business organizations and bureaucracies) in which individuals assume positions and perform roles. The rationality of these organizations is determined by an efficient goal-means relationship that is specific for each sphere, unrelated to an overarching meaning-system, so that each person is able to perform his anonymous specialist function. The organization supervises and is concerned exclusively with efficient task-performances: the individual is "replaceable as a person in proportion to the increasing anonymity of specialized roles that are determined by the functionally rational institutions" (Luckmann 1967, p. 96). What Wilson calls a "rational empirical orientation to the world" (1976a, p. 11), the opposite of a magical-religious orientation, predominates. Control is technical and bureaucratic, not moral or religious: "It has become impersonal and amoral, a matter of routine techniques and unknown officials" (p. 20). The relationships that have developed here and have become more and more typical for the different functional spheres are "*gesellschaftlich*" (Tönnies) or "secondary." They are, indeed, positional, contractual, formal, utilitarian, confined to segments of the person, and transferable. The individual is no longer regarded as an end in himself, as in the *Gemeinschaft*, where the dominant relationships were "primary" (Cooley), i.e.

affective, total, and regulated by habits. "A community really involves face-to-face relationships of known persons . . . Society, in contrast involves the interaction of role-performances of unknown role-players" (Wilson 1976a, p. 264).

This bureaucratic type of relationship extends into the social world. City life, commerce, welfare, school, entertainment and even the neighborhood are basically *gesellschaftlich*. Whereas the first industrial revolution left certain personal bonds standing—certain sectors of vertical integration, e.g. nucleated villages and small firms; a "respectable" working class, an artisan and a middle class horizontally bound—, the second industrial revolution, "of which the typical instance might," according to Martin, "be the advent of electronic media" tends to break all bonds. Over time both have produced conditions of anonymity and depersonalization, the weakening of horizontal bonds (the impact of anomie), and the breaking of vertical bonds (the impact of class). In Martin's words:

The institutions congruent with modern industry, with bureaucracy and technical rationality, are large, impersonal, and mechanical in their operation. The intimate bonds of horizontal community, working class or otherwise, are broken up; the ecology of the city encourages fragmentation; the small shop gives way to the supermarket; the family firm enters the international consortium; the small farm is rationalized into larger units run by scientific agriculture; the moderate-sized office is swallowed up in large-scale bureaucracy; the community of school is wrecked by education factories operated by mobile teachers. And overall the urban style associated with these developments englobes a yet larger proportion of the population (1978, pp. 83-87).

As the community, the *Gemeinschaft*, ceases to be the basic principle of social organization and develops in a more and more *gesellschaftlich* manner (Weber called it "*Vergesellschaftung*" and Wilson "societalization"), social control changed from moral or religious to technical and bureaucratic, based on rational criteria. So the old morality decayed.

"The old morality constituted a system of substantive values: the new rationality composes a system of procedural values." The values of the functionally differentiated system are procedural values that help us "not to entertain simultaneously ends that are mutually contradictory" and "to choose the most efficient means for the attainment of the ends we select." And ultimate ends, substantive commitments, "are pushed back in an infinite regress in our concern to choose the best means for proximate ends, which themselves become the best means to yet further ends." This estab-

ishment of a chain of means and ends of course involves disputes, which are settled again on rational and technical grounds. The solutions which are offered are indeed an outcome of the struggle that is dictated by the question: "rational for whom?" (Wilson 1982, pp. 166-167).

What then is this So-called Civil Religion?

This leaves us with the question: what then is this so-called civil religion? It cannot be a "religion" *alongside* of other religions, i.e. churches and sects, contrary to what Bellah claims. In a functionally differentiated society, the typical "religious" function can be taken up explicitly only in a specialized sub-system (Luhmann 1981, p. 302). Rather, it is the supposition that communication on the societal level is based on value consensus. Consequently, civil religion and organized religions are complementary: they do not compete with one another (pp. 303 and 305). Thus, "civil religion" applies on the level of the total society—and not on the level of the religious sub-system—but, as we shall see, only to an *implicit* consensus on basic values.

Indeed, it is very difficult to formulate the so-called *Grundwerte*, the value consensus, explicitly. On the one hand, each and every specification of values can lead toward dissension; on the other hand, although it is possible to refer to them and to try to operationalize basic values in such special functional contexts as law and politics, there are, according to Luhmann, problems of "translation." For example, how can core values be operationalized in party platforms and political conduct? Concrete political programmes cannot logically be inferred from such core values as freedom, solidarity, and justice. There is no way of deducing them on the basis of rational decisions (pp. 304-05).

These problems of making *explicit* the core values of society and of translating them into concrete action, point to the fact that value integration is only one, and in our differentiated society a minor, mechanism for the integration of society. To speak in Durkheimian terms: modern societies are now integrated, they are not cohesive (Fenn 1982, p. 17 and Wilson 1981, p. 358-359). In more "traditional" societies cohesion was achieved through a collective consciousness that provided a powerful source of feelings of solidarity or shared moral obligation (Durkheim 1960, pp. 99-100). In "modern" societies integration is mediated by the fact that all sub-systems form an inner-societal environment for each other. They should know and respect the functional specialization of every other sub-system, i.e., they should respect each other's boundaries and prevent their own

operations from causing insoluble problems in other sub-systems (Luhmann 1977, pp. 242-246).

Conclusions

We may thus conclude that the integration of a modern society is achieved through observing sub-system boundaries. Consequently, religion has only a relative bearing on societal integration: as a sub-system it should not cause insoluble problems in the other societal sub-systems, and the so-called "civil religion" was only a temporary solution to the problem of social integration in a transitional period.

Indeed, civil religion was formulated in the late eighteenth century as a consequence of functional differentiation. It represented in Rousseau's conception an operative religion clearly differentiated from the state and the churches. It was conceived to promote sentiments of sociability and good citizenship. In fact, the God of law and order, the supreme judge, who rewards the just and punishes the evildoers, was the sacred cosmization of social control. Civil religion was also conceived to legitimate the mission of the nation: freedom, justice and charity.

The decay of civil religion is the ultimate consequence of functional differentiation. In a functionally differentiated society, the grip of the total societal system on the sub-systems has changed (Luhmann 1977, pp. 242-246). A sub-system belongs to a societal system not because it is guided in its structural choices by requirements, values and norms applying to all sub-systems, but, because it is oriented toward the other social sub-systems. Integration is mediated by the fact that all sub-systems are an inner-societal environment for each other, and have to prevent their operations producing insoluble problems in other sub-systems. Hence, integration is not based on cohesion but on the prevision of the inter-system consequences of systemic action. Consequently, the moral system is rather based on procedural than substantive values. To the extent that integration is based on cognitive rather than normative mechanisms, those sub-systems of society which are primarily based on cognitive processes, like science and economy, will command better chances of development than those based on cathectic processes, like religion.

Even if civil religion is still used on solemn occasions by national politicians, e.g. the presidents of the U.S.A., to stir the emotions of the masses and to enhance their own appeal, the likelihood is that not only will it sound the more and more false, as the shell is empty and broken, but that its legitimating power will more and more decay. Indeed, according to Wimberley's studies, civil religion is more readily distinguished as a religious

dimension only among the religiously active. But, church practice and the belief in God and the hereafter are steadily decaying in the Western world (Stoetzel 1983, pp. 87-120); consequently civil religion will gradually lose its ascendancy over the masses. The decay of church religiosity is also a consequence of the extension of functional differentiation in Western societies (Dobbelaere 1984, pp. 105-109). As a result, we may extend Wilson's caption that secularization is a concomitant of the process of societalization, by stating that the secularization of civil religion is a concomitant of the process of societalization, itself a consequence of the functional differentiation of our societies.

Postscript: Shinto, a Living Civil Religion?²

The preceding text on civil religion was based on an analysis of studies done by American, English, French, and German sociologists, and was written in Belgium before my arrival in Japan at the end of September 1984. During my stay there, I became particularly intrigued by the position of Shinto in this country. If I am not mistaken, certain Shinto officials claim that Shinto is not a religion, but rather the symbolic expression of an ethnic culture, i.e. the "celebration of the traditions of the Japanese people." Others, however, Buddhists, Christians, and also comparative religionists, claim that Shinto is a religion: it has shrines, rituals, a mythology, prayers, festivals and priests... and, even if it has no elaborated theology, it has some doctrinal tenets, like the belief in supernatural powers, i.e. kami. They claim that Shinto has all the elements generally attributed to religion by scientists and believers. Consequently, they consider Shinto a polytheistic religion.

I want to suggest, however, that Shinto is not a religion on the level of the religious sub-system. In Herberg's terms, it is not a "conventional" religion like Buddhism and Christianity, but an "operative" religion. It is a system of attitudes, beliefs, feelings, standards, and practices that provides society with an ultimate context of meaning and value, in terms of which social life is integrated and social activities are validated. In other words, it is possibly the only still surviving true civil religion, and now, in contrast to earlier State Shinto, clearly differentiated from the State. Why do I suggest that Shinto is a civil religion?

Through its myths and rituals Shinto identifies itself with the whole range of Japanese mythology, history, tradition, and aspirations. The kami venerated at Shinto shrines—the noble, sacred spirits which are adored for their virtues and authority (Ono 1962, p. 6)—"once possessed human form" (Ueda 1981, p. 33). Indeed, "any forceful manifestation of life or power that has a bearing on human existence is at least potentially a kami. . . . But the

only kami introduced into shrine worship are those with human characteristics" (p. 38). Among others we noticed: Amaterasu, the mythical head of the imperial line; kami appearing in the myth of the origin of Japan; ancestral spirits of emperors and noble families; spirits of national heroes, men of outstanding deed or virtues, and those who have contributed to civilization, culture, and human welfare; spirits of those who have died for the state or the community; and the guardian spirits of the land, occupations, and skills (Ueda 1981, p. 38 and Ono 1962, p. 7). Shintoism is, I suggest, the sacralization of outstanding Japaneseness, or Nihonism as it is called by Ben-Dasan, and is based on "human experience instead of a covenant or body of dogmas" (Ben-Dasan 1972, p. 91).

Through visits to a *jinja*, a Shinto shrine, children are received in the community and their changing societal positions are sacralized. *Miyamairi* is the first visit of a newborn baby to the neighborhood shrine, where it is presented to the kami by its parents (and grandparents) as an expression of their gratitude, and where it is formally welcomed by a Shinto priest into the community. Children are introduced in the way of Japaneseness at home, and they celebrate it at *shichi-go-san*. During this festival period, children of three, five and seven are taken by their parents, quite often in the company of their grandparents, to a local *jinja*. The girls, mothers and grandmothers are mostly dressed in kimono; the boys, fathers, and grandfathers exceptionally; but all are dressed up for the occasion. Through the names of the shrines these children learn about the mythological foundation of their nation, and about great statesmen, generals, and outstanding men whom the nation has produced: e.g. Emperor Meiji, Tokugawa Ieyasu, General Nogi, and many others. Indeed, they are taught how to venerate mythological and historical kami, who helped in the founding and building of the nation, and who protect their community and the Japanese way of life. When entering the university, coming of age (*seijin-no-hi*) and marrying, again they go to the shrines to confirm for their country that they will endure, and will ensure its continuance and improvement. During the first New Year's visit to a Shinto shrine (*hatsu-mōde*), millions of Japanese, dressed in kimono, pay tribute to outstanding Japanese, saints and martyrs of Nihonism (Ben-Dasan 1972, p. 124), to whom the shrines are dedicated, their predecessors, whom they ask for happiness during the coming year, and for help to fulfil their duties.

In the *matsuri* or Shinto festivals, which combine ritual and festivity, i.e. "life-participation" and "life-animation" among both kami and people, symbolization and mobilization renew and revitalize the "life-power" of the kami and the human beings. Again, children, youth, adults and the elderly, dressed in traditional Japanese style, pay tribute to the enshrined mytho-

logical or historical kami, who helped to found, preserve, or aggrandize the country, their community and the Japanese way of life. In a procession, participants express the renewed vitality of the kami, and the crowd of spectators share in the intense excitement and animation, which is stimulated by abundantly drinking *nihonshu* or *sakè*. Consequently, the *matsuri* mobilize the community and promote friendship between people living there (Sonoda 1975).

Recent studies have pointed out that the community structure is disintegrating in Japan. The rural areas are more and more depopulated as a consequence of geographical mobility to the cities, and big cities are not integrated on a communal basis. Shinto shrines came into existence to enshrine the guardian kami of a clan. With the collapse of the clan system, the guardian kami became the tutelary spirits of a local community. Now the local shrines are losing significance. Only shrines capable of extricating themselves from their particular area, which are able to institutionalize spiritual ties other than those of clan and neighborhood, have a brighter future. These big-name shrines thrive, because they are able to attract worshippers from far and near (Morioka 1975, pp. 70-72).

However, some authors also have stressed that a new form of community building emerged in industrial Japan: the companies which are the new "villages" (Honda 1984, p. 27; and Swyngedouw 1984a, p. 555). Swyngedouw suggests that the traditional communal bonds have largely broken down, but, that they were replaced by establishing, on the one hand, a strong individual personality—only for a minority of the population, however—, or, on the other hand, a community in the companies (*kaisha* or *kigyō*). Here again, Shinto plays an important role in strengthening the communal bonds in the companies. Companies, either "infiltrated" existing local shrines or have established their own shrines for worship (Uno 1984). Consequently, either they support the traditional local festivals, or they have their own annual *matsuri*. The Shinto shrines, rituals and festivals, must promote *musubi*, the power "which enables things to be produced, reproduced, and united." It had always been related to rice production, but, is now transferred to industrial production (Honda 1984, pp. 24-25). In other words, Shinto is "increasingly transferring this creative, evolutionary idea of *musubi* from the forces of nature to the forces that sustain industrial productivity" (Swyngedouw 1984b, p. 2).

When I heard about the relationship between Shinto and industry, I tried, through my university acquaintances and friends, to contact companies in order to learn more about the relationship of "religion" and economy. But my requests were declined: company officials did not see any point in receiving a sociologist of *religion*. M. Uno, who studied the Shinto *jinja* in

big companies, explained this refusal to me. Company officials do not consider Shinto to be a religion, because it is not a personal religion. It is considered to be the expression of the community, the cohesion of which it symbolizes and promotes. Indeed, as I understood later on, Shinto is not a "conventional" religion, it is an "operative" religion. It is used to express the Japaneseness of the companies; it is the civil religion of Japan. Shinto shrines in companies and on top of the *depaato* (department stores), these mirrors of Japanese society (Morechand 1980, p. 75), refer again and again to the fact that these institutions are Japanese. Even in foreign countries, the *kaisha* build a shrine. It symbolizes for them Nihonism, and through Shinto rituals and festivals they hope to stimulate cohesion and productivity.

My hypothesis of Shinto as a civil religion is still very impressionistic. But, I have the feeling that for the first time I have encountered a living example of civil religion. Shinto symbolizes the life of the nation, it expresses the joyful acceptance of life, and ritualizes its flow: birth, 7-5-3, university entrance, coming of age, the start of a new year, the establishment of a company, the start of a new family. . . . It also invigorates life through its *matsuri*. This life, this vitality, is symbolized in the *kami*, an exceptional spirit, an outstanding person. And the link between the *kami* and the people, the community and the nation, is further expressed in the person of the Emperor, who is the head of the nation. He symbolizes its long history, its unity. But, at the same time, he is also the archpriest of Shinto: he personally makes offerings to his ancestors and worships the *kami*.

It is through Shinto that the Japanese inherit the past and prepare for the future: Shinto ritualized the agricultural economy of the past and now ritualizes the industrial economy of the future. It is the religion of Japan's past and future, and stands for *musubi* and the core values of the nation: harmony, unity, loyalty, allegiance, piety, respect, naturalness, simplicity, restraint, cooperation, flexibility, and truthfulness. Contrary to W. Davis, I do not consider that Japan's civil religion is secularized because State Shinto was simply replaced by a secularized Japan-theory, a theory about the uniqueness of Japanese culture, society and people (Davis 1983). On the contrary, State Shinto as civil religion has been replaced by Shrine Shinto, but it has always been a secular religion. It is a "devotion to humanity" and as Saigō, a martyr of Nihonism, expressed it: one must "love others and oneself in the same way, that is, in the same spirit" (Ben-Dasan 1972, p. 127). This is quite unlike the command of a "conventional" religion, e.g. Christianity, since it omits to add "for the love of God."

Finally, at this stage of the analysis, Shinto, as the Japanese civil religion, confronts sociologists with a few questions. First of all, Shinto more readily fits Durkheim's conceptualization of religion than that of Rousseau. Indeed,

Shinto is animistic, polytheistic, and has no dogma about the existence of God, the Supreme Judge, and Providence. It stresses the Durkheimian idea of unity of religion and society: it is the symbolization and celebration of a cohesive community. How is it that in Japan such a civil religion survives? To answer this question in Fenn's terms: Japan still conceives of itself as "really real," as a "nation."

The question of course is: is this not a cultural fiction, a self-fulfilling prophecy that sooner or later will be pricked? In the urban areas a process of societalization has set in, the communal basis is already disintegrating. In the future, social integration will depend more and more on functional specialization and boundary maintenance than on cohesion (Durkheim, Fenn, Luhmann, and Wilson). That Shinto as a civil religion could become mere rhetoric is clear from an analysis of its so-called new "villages." Knecht has aptly stressed that the arguments in favor of these new "villages" as a new communal basis, so far, have only stressed parallelism or analogy of form between villages and large companies. He underscores a difference of identity: in a village, descent is of utmost importance. One is born in a village and the allegiance to the group is directly or indirectly based on blood relations (Knecht 1984, pp. 21-23). This is completely lacking in big industry.

The study of Kamata is of importance here. He reports on the working conditions and the atmosphere in the Toyota plants, a company that has its own tutelary kami, shrines, and *matsuri*. Kamata's report about the working conditions and the atmosphere in the plant suggests that the idea of the company as one "family" is mere rhetoric. Indeed, humanity is given up for productivity, the conveyer belt forces the workers into submission: intelligence, creativity, and freedom are not permitted. Although there is some feeling of solidarity among the workers, there is a rift between seasonal workers and regular workers. And the blue collar workers are strictly segregated from the office staff and management (Kamata 1982). All the core values of Nihonism, celebrated by Shinto, seem to be lacking. Cohesion is very low but social integration, forced upon the workers by the conveyer belt, provides a substitute.

It seems then that in Japan also a more differentiated form of civil religion—Shrine Shinto instead of State Shinto—could well be just a step in the disintegration of Japanese civil religion, and the use of Shinto in large companies could hasten this process. More studies are certainly needed. But, civil religion in Japan, in the form of Shinto, seems also to be a transitional solution to the new problems of social integration. It may still be used, for example, on solemn occasions by captains of industry to enhance their appeal for greater productivity and to stir the emotions of the workers.

The prospect is however, that, sooner or later, as when civil religion is invoked by politicians in America, this "religious appeal" will also increasingly sound false.

Notes

1. Herberg distinguishes between "conventional religion": Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, etc., and "operative religion": "that system of attitudes, beliefs, feelings, standards, and practices that actually *does in fact* provide the society with an ultimate context of meaning and value in terms of which social life is integrated and social activities are validated" (Herberg 1967, p. 472). The examples he gives are "German *Rassen-* or *Volksgemeinschaft* and the American Way of Life."
2. I thank here Professor K. Yanagawa for having invited me to the regional conference organized by the International Conference for the Sociology of Religion in Tokyo (1978-79), and the subsequent visits to shrines and temples. It was at this occasion that I could participate at the *hatsu-mōde* of millions of Japanese to the Meiji (Tokyo), Atsuta (Nagoya) and Heian (Kyoto) shrines (1-3 January 1979). Professor S. Anzai and Professor J. Swyngedouw invited me to Japan again for the last three months of 1984. As a Visiting Fellow of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture (Nagoya) I was able to visit several shrines during *shichi-go-san*: Yūshima, Kanda, Meiji and Hie shrines in Tokyo, Hachiman shrine in Kamakura, and the Hakone shrine. This research was also supported by the National Fund for Scientific Research of Belgium.

References

- BELLAH, Robert N.
 1967 Civil religion in America. *Daedalus* 96/1:1-21.
 1970 *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-traditional World*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers.
 1975 *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial*. New York: The Seabury Press.

- 1976 Response to the panel of civil religion. *Sociological Analysis* 37/2: 153-159.
- 1980 Civil religion and the legitimation of the American republic. In *Varieties of Civil Religion*, R.N. Bellah and P. E. Hammond, eds. San Francisco: Harper and Row.

BEN-DASAN, Isaiah

- 1972 *The Japanese and the Jews*. Tokyo: Weatherhill.

BERGER, Peter L.

- 1967 *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Garden City: Doubleday.

CHRISTENSON, James A. and WIMBERLEY, Ronald C.

- 1978 Who is civil religious? *Sociological Analysis* 39/1:77-83.

COLEMAN, John H.

- 1970 Civil religion. *Sociological Analysis* 31/2: 67-77.

DAVIS, K. and MOORE, W. E.

- 1961 Some principles of stratification. In *Sociology, the Progress of a Decade. A Collection of Articles*, S. M. Lipset and N.J. Smelser, eds. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

DAVIS, Winston

- 1961 The hollow onion: The secularization of Japanese civil religion. In *The Challenge of Japan's Internationalization: Organization and Culture*, M. Hiroshi and B. Harumi, eds. Tokyo: Kodansha.

DOBBELAERE, Karel

- 1984 La religion en Belgique. In *L'univers des Belges: Valeurs anciennes et valeurs nouvelles dans les années 80*, R. Rezsóhazy and J. Kerkhofs, eds. Louvain-la-Neuve: Ciaco.

DURKHEIM, Emile

- 1960 *De la division du travail social*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

FENN, Richard K.

- 1978 *Toward a Theory of Secularization*. Storrs: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion.
- 1982 *Liturgies and Trials: The Secularization of Religious Language*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

GREELEY, Andrew M.

- 1972 *The Denominational Society: A Sociological Approach to Religion in America*. Glenview: Scott, Foresman and Company.

HAMMOND, Phillip E.

- 1976 The sociology of American civil religion: A bibliographic essay. *Sociological Analysis* 37/2:169-182.
- 1980 The conditions for civil religion: A comparison of the United States and Mexico. In *Varieties of Civil Religion*, R.N. Bellah and P. E. Hammond, eds. San Francisco: Harper and Row.

HERBERG, Will

- 1955 *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*. New York: Doubleday. Rev. ed.
- 1967 Religion in a secularized society: The new shape of religion in America. In *The Sociology of Religion. An Anthology*, R.D. Knudten, ed. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

HONDA Sōichirō

- 1984 Shinto in Japanese culture. *Nanzan Bulletin* 8:24-30.

KAMATA, S.

- 1982 *Japan in the Passing Lane: An Insider's Account of Life in a Japanese Auto Factory*. New York: Pantheon. Republished in 1984 as an Unwin Paperback.

KNECHT, Peter

- 1984 *Tradition and Society: Reflections on Rural and Urban Life in Japan*. Taipei: Fu Jen Catholic University.

LUCKMANN, Thomas

- 1967 *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society*. New York: Macmillan.
- 1975 On the rationality of institutions in modern life. *Archives européennes de Sociologie*. 16/1:1-15.

LUHMANN, Niklas

- 1977 *Funktion der Religion*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- 1981 Grundwerte als Zivilreligion. Zur wissenschaftlichen Karriere eines Themas. In *Sociologische Aufklärung 3: Soziales System, Gesellschaft, Organisation*, N. Luhmann, ed. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.

MARTIN, David

- 1978 *A General Theory of Secularization*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

MERTON, Robert K.

1957 *Social Theory and Social Structure*. Glencoe: The Free Press.

MORECHAND, Françoise

1980 Depaato. In *A Hundred More Things Japanese*, Hyoe Murakami and Donald Richie, eds. Tokyo: Japan Culture Institute.

MORIOKA Kiyomi

1975 *Religion in Changing Japanese Society*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.

ONO Sokyō

1962 *Shinto: The Kami Way*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company.

PARSONS, Talcott

1974 Religion in postindustrial America: The problem of secularization. *Social Research* 41/2:193-225.

ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques

1943 *Du contract social*. Aubier: Ed. Montaigne.

SONODA Minoru

1975 The traditional festival in urban society. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 2/2-3:103-135.

STOETZEL, Jean

1983 *Les valeurs du temps présent: Une enquête*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

SWYNGEDOUW, Jan

1984 The living musubi faith of the Japanese. *The Japan Missionary Bulletin* 38/9:551-558.

1984b Images of the divine in Japan's Shinto tradition. Paper presented at a conference on "God: The Contemporary Discussion" in the session on "Religious Art: Images of the Divine," Seoul, 9-15 August 1984.

UEDA Kenji

1981 Shinto. In *Japanese Religion: A Survey by the Agency for Cultural Affairs*, Hori Ichirō et al., eds. Tokyo: Kodansha.

UNO Masato 宇野正人

1984 Kigyō no jinja 企業の神社 [Company Shrines]. In *Jinja shinpō* 神社新報 [Shrine Newspaper] (series of fifty articles).

WILSON, Bryan

1976a *Contemporary Transformations of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

1976b Aspects of secularization in the west. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 3/3-4:259-276.

1981 Morality and the modern social system. *Acts of the 16th International Conference for the Sociology of Religion: Religion, Values, and Daily Life*. Paris: C. I. S. R.

1982 *Religion in Sociological Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

WIMBERLEY, Ronald C.

1976 Testing the civil religion hypothesis. *Sociological Analysis* 37/4:341-352.