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ON TAKING RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEWS SERIOUSLY

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We need to take alternative worldviews - including religious worldviews - more seriously.

Robert Keohane¹

We're an empire now, and when we act we create our own reality.

Senior Adviser to President Bush²

The twenty-first century is dawning... as a century of religion.

Samuel P. Huntington³

The study of other people's religious beliefs is now no longer merely desirable, but necessary for our very survival.

Karen Armstrong⁴

Writing in the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001, Robert Keohane (2002:272-287) challenged scholars of international relations to reflect on whether their theories of world politics were adequate for explaining such acts of "informal violence". Given the increasing urgency to make sense of world politics in light of this catastrophic event, Keohane chastised the discipline for the parochialism of its paradigmatic disputes and urged IR scholars to pay more attention to synthesis and less to differentiating their views from those of others. Suggesting that 9/11 could best be understood through a synthesis of classical realism, institutionalism, and constructivism, Keohane claimed that understanding this tragic event also demanded taking other worldviews, including religious worldviews, seriously.

In this paper, I take up Keohane's challenge to take religious worldviews seriously. Focusing more widely than on the events of 9/11, I examine worldviews of both Christian and Islamic groups that support religious violence as well as on the deeper cultural context out of which they are emerging. I do this because the growing appeal of

¹ Keohane (2002:282)

² Quoted in David Susskind *New York Times*

³ Huntington (2004:15)

⁴ Armstrong (2004:304)

conservative religious values in the United States, at the dawn of what Samuel Huntington has called a “century of religion,” suggests that we should not assume that “our” world is rational and secular while “theirs” is not. I am also concerned with rigid boundaries, such as the discursive divides between good and evil, that our contemporary foreign policy discourse is creating - boundaries that discourage efforts to understand others’ worldviews.⁵

Keohane advocates theoretical synthesis. However, I believe that this synthesis may be more challenging than he suggests. As Keohane claims, incorporating religious motivations into IR theory is difficult. One reason for this is that theories built upon the epistemological foundations of secular rationalism are not particularly useful for understanding religious motivations or worldviews of those who express a deep hostility to modernity and secular thinking. Indeed, the social sciences, which have emerged out of Enlightenment thinking, are themselves part of the secular rationalist thinking that adherents to conservative religious worldviews attack. For these reasons religious worldviews may be better understood using methodologies that are reflexive and dialogical not those based on instrumental rationality.⁶

In the first part of the paper, I examine the worldviews of some of those who commit violence in the name of religion, both inside and outside the United States – Christian, Jewish, and Islamic. Similarities are striking. The rhetoric of both Christian

⁵ This is underscored in David Frum, a former assistant to President Bush, and Richard Perle, a former assistant secretary of defense, (2003:149) who emphasize their contempt for what they term the Bush administration’s solicitude toward Muslim sensitivities in the weeks immediately following 9/11.

⁶ It is interesting that, in this piece, Keohane refers to his 1970s work on interdependence (Keohane and Nye, 1977) rather than to his more rationalist scholarship of the 1980s. Religious fundamentalism, with its mixed motives some ideational some materialist, is a puzzle to rational choice theorists. Daniel Philpott’s (2002:68) definition of religion, “a set of beliefs about the ultimate grounds of existence, that which is unconditioned, not itself created or caused, and the communities and practices that form around these beliefs” suggests a phenomenon that cannot be explained by rational choice.

and Islamic extremist groups demonstrates a sense of rootlessness and loss of identity; all exhibit deep hostility to secular rationalism, modernity, and globalization. While they depend on modern technology, particularly communication technologies, to spread their message and plan their strategies, all are deeply suspicious of international institutions and the “new world order.”⁷

I then examine the broader economic and cultural contexts from which contemporary religious violence is emerging. Albeit in an extreme and perverted form, perpetrators of violence and their supporters emerge out of a more prevalent search for identity and cultural values - an attempt to answer the question ‘who are we?’ a search which Samuel Huntington (2004) has termed the most distinctive feature of the post cold war world. I also discuss the ideational foundations of contemporary neoconservative religious thinking which is having an influence on, and providing significant support for, American foreign policy. An ideational foreign policy derived from a construction of reality that divides the world into good and evil suggests that ideas are more than a cloak for materialist interests. As a senior advisor to President George W. Bush suggested, empire, a term used positively by the administration, permits not only the construction of reality but the ability to act unilaterally on that reality.

Following Keohane’s suggestion, in the third part of the paper I examine some IR scholarship, realist and constructivist, that can help us begin to build methodological frameworks for understanding religious worldviews. I draw on the writings of Hans Morgenthau to demonstrate classical realism’s discomfort with secular rationalism for understanding human motivation. I offer linguistic constructivism as a useful tool for

⁷ Juergensmeyer (2000:222) states that he is struck, in his interviews with supporters of religious violence, by the intensity of their quest for deeper spiritual values than those offered by the superficial values of the modern world.

understanding religious beliefs and quests for meaning and identity which are so important to adherents to the conservative religions that I discuss. As I suggest in parts one and two, gender and race have been key constitutive features of most religious worldviews. In the concluding section, I draw on some feminist theological scholarship that, I believe, can deepen our understanding of the patriarchal foundations on which the religious worldviews that I discuss are built. Feminist scholarship can also suggest some different foundations on which to build less conflictual worldviews. It can also offer some epistemological foundations from which we might conceptualize a different form of rationality that could contribute to providing a synthesis between religious and secular thinking.

Violence in the Name of God

While terrorism is not a new phenomenon, there was an increase in religious violence in the last decades of the twentieth century (Juergensmeyer, 2000:6). Individuals who support or commit religious violence see themselves as “saints” or “martyrs” striving for a more perfect and more simplified world.⁸ They deplore moral ambiguity and uncertainty and see the world in Manichean terms where no compromise is possible. They use militaristic language, frequently from religious texts, to describe a world in a perpetual state of war - a battle between good and evil. If evil means are necessary to achieve good ends they will be used (Juergensmeyer, 2000: 149). Worldviews are

⁸ My illustrations rely on interviews conducted by Juergensmeyer (2000) and Stern (2003). The goal articulated by both these authors is to study religious violence from the inside – to understand the worldviews of those who commit these acts of violence and the cultural contexts from which they emerge. Both analyze a variety of religions including Christianity, Islam and Judaism. While I focus on some Christian and Islamic groups in this paper, it is striking the extent to which similar grievances exist across all conservative religious traditions out of which these movements emerge.

surprisingly similar - whether they are inside or outside the United States, Christian, Jewish, or Islamic. All decry secularism, materialism and modernity which create confusion and fear amid a general lack of authority and which manifest themselves through tolerance of “inappropriate” sexual behavior and lack of racial hierarchy. Indeed, identity issues are at the core of a search for certainty in a world where too much choice of identity can seem overwhelming (Stern, 2003:156). Material wealth, engendered by capitalism, leads to moral decadence. Yet motives are material as well as spiritual and emotional: heavenly rewards are promised to perpetrators of religious violence but so are material incentives.

Extremist religious groups decry international institutions and what they describe as the “new world order” led by a secular United States. In an interview with Jessica Stern, Kerry Noble, one of the former leaders of an American Christian cult, Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord (CSA) based in rural Arkansas, stated that the strength of international institutions promoting world government, including the United Nations and international banks, are indications that the Antichrist, whose forces also include the IMF, the Council on Foreign Relations and the “One-Worlders” is already here (Stern 200:11-17). Michael Kimmel and Abby Ferber’s (2000) study of American right wing rural Christian militias reveals a similar fear of a “new world order” and an “invasion” of the United States by the United Nations. Leaders of the Pakistani jihad group Lashkar e Taiba (Army of the Pure), a member of the International Islamic Front, bin Laden’s umbrella organization, told Stern that the West enslaves Muslim countries through debts to the IMF, the World Bank, foreign aid and loans (Stern, 2003:119). Contrary to CSA’s fears of a UN invasion, Army of the Pure claims that the United

Nations is a spy for the United States and international institutions are synonymous with American imperialism (Buruma and Margalit, 2004:8). For many overseas groups, the United States symbolizes the new world order, the greatest enemy of all.

Many of the individuals whom Jessica Stern interviewed indicated a sense of wounded masculinity. Indeed, gender and race are central for understanding the worldviews of perpetrators and supporters of religious violence. Almost all who commit violence in the name of religion are men.⁹ Many express ambivalence toward women, homophobia, and fears of being marked “feminine.” Kerry Noble recounted his humiliation as a child when he was forced to attend girls’ physical education classes because he could not keep up with the boys (Stern, 2003:25). Bob Lokey, a leader in an extremist anti-abortion group in the United States that advocates killing doctors who perform abortions, tells Stern that, in the United States, there is widespread discrimination against the white male (Stern, 2003:166).¹⁰ The last will and testament of Mohammed Atta, one of the perpetrators of the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center, banned women from his grave lest they pollute it (Tickner, 2002:335). Kimmel and Ferber found that the followers of right-wing militia movements in the United States consist mainly of lower-middle class white men. It is through militias that these individuals believe that American manhood can be restored. Right wing militias believe they are engaged in an armed struggle against a state which they believe is controlled by feminists, environmentalist, blacks and Jews (Kimmel and Ferber, 2000:595). Christian Identity groups see the state as emasculating and blame feminists and their nonwhite

⁹ Some women have played a prominent role in violent groups; however, they are groups motivated by secular political ideologies or ethnic separatism (Juergensmeyer, 2000:196). This is hardly surprising given that all fundamentalist religions practice severe discrimination against women.

¹⁰ It is striking that most of the leaders of extreme pro-life groups are men, many of whom exhibit considerable hostility toward women.

coconspirators for their humiliation (Stern, 2003:286). Avigdor Eskin, an ultraorthodox Israeli Jew, blames “Afro-Americanism” for the destruction of American culture; surprisingly, he displays a reluctant admiration for Muslims who, unlike Westerners, are willing to die for their ideas (Stern, 2003:99-101). Many members of radical religious movements see themselves as soldiers and many are military veterans. Soldiering is an accepted social role in society and soldiers have the moral license to kill (Juergensmeyer, 2000:189).

Buruma and Margalit (2004:5) claim that the issue of women lies at the heart of Islamic “Occidentalism” which they define as a dehumanizing picture of the West painted by its enemies.¹¹ Most conservative Muslims are not political Islamists but advocates of enforcing public morality which is largely about regulating female behavior and returning to what they see as a “traditional” way of life (Buruma and Margalit, 2004:128). When he was living in New York, Egyptian Sayyid Qutb, one of the most influential Islamist thinkers of the twentieth century, claimed that what most disturbed him about American society was the immodest behavior of American women (Buruma and Margalit, 2004:32). The attack on the Twin Towers symbolizes the metaphor of the destruction of the sinful city; the city embodies everything evil – especially commerce and female sexuality.

While the leaders of extreme religious movements are often middle-aged and affluent, their followers tend to be young urban males experiencing economic hardships, unemployment and social marginalization. While leaders of these movements see their role as “purifying” the world, operatives are often influenced by pragmatic incentives

¹¹ Occidentalism is not confined to the Middle East. Born in Europe and transferred to other parts of the world, a common theme is the advocacy of a type of spiritual politics in which politics and religion form a seamless web (Buruma and Margalit, 2004:7).

such as money which is frequently provided to “martyrs” families. (Stern, 2003:4-5). In Pakistan many male children are educated at religious schools or *madrassahs* because they receive free books, housing and board. Often poor families and those in refugee camps cannot afford the cost of textbooks and transportation frequently required at public school (Stern, 2003:293). Racial hierarchies are also prevalent in extremist religious movements. As Jessica Stern’s interview of an individual from Zanzibar who participated in the bombing of the U.S. embassy in Tanzania in 1998 demonstrates, recruits for Islamic extremism are coming increasingly from Africa where anti-Americanism is on the rise. But Al Qaeda is highly tiered and Africans are, for the most part, not admitted to the upper ranks; they do, however, provide willing foot soldiers for religious violence (Stern, 2003:237-248).

Jessica Stern (2003:282) claims that the religious violence we face today is not only a response to political and economic grievances but to what she terms, using the language of Sartre, a “God-shaped hole” where values like tolerance and equal rights for women are irritating to those who feel left behind by modernity. All extremist religious movements display a deep hostility to modern rationalism, secular thinking, materialism, and globalization. They draw selectively on religious texts, often militant or violent, to exhort their followers to “return” to what they define as a “traditional” way of life. While those who are willing to kill in the name of religion are a small minority, they represent, albeit in an extreme and perverted form, feelings of alienation and loss of identity that are far more widespread and symptomatic of larger trends.

Some Broader Implications of the Religious War of Ideas

Mark Juergensmeyer (2000:225-26) suggests that the moral leadership of the secular state has become increasingly challenged after the end of the cold war, a struggle, also portrayed in Manichean terms, which provided contesting models of moral politics – communism and democracy. The end of the cold war deprived America of the evil empire against which it could define itself (Huntington, 2004:11). Today, communism and democracy have been replaced by the single model of the global market, a model which, according to Juergensmeyer, is devoid of political ideals and lacks clear standards for moral behavior. This has reinforced a public sense of insecurity which results in disaffection with political leaders and the growth of right-wing religious movements that feed on the public's perception of the immorality of government.

Fears about loss of identity are intensifying cultural clashes that reinforce exclusionary international (often racialized) boundaries. In the face of what he has termed religiously driven militant Islam or what he has famously called a “clash of civilizations,” Samuel Huntington (2004:340) has suggested that the attacks of 9/11 have mobilized America's identity as a Christian nation. Huntington claims that the religious component of their identity has taken on new meaning for Americans. According to Huntington, this identity is Anglo-Protestant – an identity he clearly favors over a more multiracial, inclusionary one, but one that is unlikely to foster tolerance and cooperation. Huntington's “clash” is mirrored by “jihadists” whose vision of the world is similar. Sayyid Qutb articulated this clash as early as the 1960s, when he claimed that the world was divided into two camps – those who are followers of Islam and those who are not (Esposito and Voll, 2003:240).

While disillusionment with the secular state is characteristic of conservative religious groups, their relations with actual states are complex. Many groups, both Christian and Muslim, are using the state to increase their political influence. This is eroding the boundary between religion and politics even in secular societies, a phenomenon which has caught international relations scholars and policy analysts by surprise. Modernization theory, popular in both the academy and the policy world in the 1950s and 1960s, assumed that, as newly independent countries began to follow the path to development previously taken by the West, they would become increasingly secular. Industrialization, urbanization, rationalization, modern science, and secular values would undermine religious beliefs believed to be “left over” from tradition (Lerner, 1958). Today, when, in many parts of the world, Western values and economic modernization are regarded as culturally alien and a threat to indigenous values these predictions seem strangely out of place. In the Muslim world there is a positive correlation between supporters of the Islamic faith and educational and occupational prestige which challenges the assumption that religious beliefs erode with modernization. Occidentalism epitomizes the resentment against the West’s belief in the alleged superiority of secular reason and science as the only way to understand natural phenomena. Occidentalists claim that instrumental rationality, associated with the mind of the West, is good for finding the best way to achieve a given goal but useless in finding the *right* way (Buruma and Margalit, 2004:76). Revolutionary Islam sees the imperialism of the mind, imposed through the spreading of Western beliefs as even more corrupting than military imperialism (Buruma and Margalit, 2004:95).

Protest against secular modernism is strong among established religions of all faiths; religious parties and movements are increasingly influencing governments not only in the Muslim world but also in India, Israel, and Latin America. Outside the West, the legacy of colonialism and the association of secularism with Western values play an important role in religion's resurgence. Nor have religious beliefs and practices declined in those parts of the world deemed "modern". While it is low but not declining in Western Europe, in the United States the rate of church membership has increased threefold over the past 150 years. In East Europe and Russia church attendance has risen since the end of the cold war (Philpott, 2002:82).

Resentment of secular modernization by Christian sects in the United States often manifests itself through cultural conflict between urban and rural communities within the same state (Howard, 2000:95). It is from rural areas that many of the conservative religious movements spring; economic factors are partial contributors to their success (Kimmel and Ferber, 2000:584). The economic restructuring of the global economy, which began in the 1970s, has dramatically affected rural areas throughout the industrial world and benefited large-scale agribusiness at the expense of the family farm. The political conservatism of the 1980s and the shift in the global economy to the neoliberal consensus began what has continued to be a widening of income inequality throughout the world.

While economic hardship fuels religious conservatism and provides recruits for religious violence, economic explanations alone cannot account for the backlash against secular modernism and the unexpected turn to conservative forms of religion. Cultural issues are driving people to support conservative agendas that do not serve their

economic interests.¹² In the United States, in addition to the downturn of the economy, a cultural backlash against the “permissive” morality of the 1960s, the Civil Rights movement, and women’s reproductive rights, as well as the disillusionment with the outcome of the Vietnam war, were some of the factors leading to the rise of a new form of religious conservatism. During the cold war tensions with the Soviet Union and fears of a nuclear holocaust fueled religious notions of a second coming (Roof, 1986:26). After the attacks of 9/11, 59 percent of Americans believed that the apocalyptic prophecies of the Book of Revelations would come true (Huntington, 2004:344).

During the 1990s, the Christian right exerted a growing influence on the Republican Party.¹³ In 2000, white evangelical Christians made up 40 percent of George Bush’s vote (Huntington, 2004:342). According to Christian Reus-Smit (2004:34), the attacks of 9/11 served to consolidate a neoconservative ascendancy over an increasingly value driven US unilateralist foreign policy which signaled a dramatic world order change beyond anything envisaged by IR scholars. Although often criticized in the academy, the popularity of Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* in the policy world signaled that responses to this and other similar attacks would be framed in idealist terms – as a civilizational struggle between good and evil.¹⁴ Appealing to the religious right, a neo-conservative foreign policy which advocates a strong military and a foreign policy

¹² Thomas Frank (2004) supports this claim with his assertion that Kansans are voting for neoconservative candidates because of their stand against abortion, homosexuality and gun control and in favor of the reintroduction of religion into politics. Ironically, these same politicians are voting for economic policies that further impoverish their supporters. Frank sees the Republican party in Kansas as being split in two with traditional wealthy Republicans being more liberal on social issues than newer, less affluent party members who are the core supporters of what he terms a new form of populist neo-conservative Republicanism.

¹³ In the 1998 U.S. mid-term elections, voter guides distributed by the Christian Coalition claimed that, on average, Republican Representatives had voted according to the Coalition’s agenda 88.7% of the time (Reus-Smit, 2004:30).

¹⁴ For a discussion of a similar “clash” thesis from a Muslim perspective articulated in the writings of Egyptian thinker Sayyid Qutb, see Esposito and Voll (2003:240-241)

that promotes American principles abroad, has emphasized the danger of moral as well as strategic disarmament. Reus-Smit (2004:30-34) lays the success of this strategy to the events of 9/11 which gave the Bush administration a mandate to reshape the global order according to American values of freedom, democracy and free enterprise, unilaterally if necessary.¹⁵ While recognizing the importance of materialist power and interests, Reus-Smit (2004:39) terms the Bush foreign policy as “idealism of preponderance,” for to imagine that one’s values are universal and that others will see them as such is idealistic.

The war on terror, the central preoccupation of the Bush foreign policy, is framed in language that strangely parallels that of its adversaries.¹⁶ The “fight against evil” is a struggle portrayed in Manichean terms with strong religious overtones. Echoing the sense of eternal struggle that is also exhibited by religious militants, David Frum and Richard Perle (2004:9) portray this war as a war without end in which there is no middle way; evoking the second coming they predict either victory or holocaust. They claim that there can be no accommodation with terrorists whose goal is to “overthrow our civilization and remake the nations of the West into Islamic societies” (Frum and Perle, 2004:42). Shortly after 9/11, President Bush used the word “crusade” to refer to the war on terrorism, a term which has infuriated Muslims around the world (Susskind, 2004:50). The polarizing statements of both sides have led some commentators to characterize the events of 9/11 as a clash of fundamentalisms (El Fadl, 2003:74).¹⁷

¹⁵ This mandate was reinforced by the New Security Strategy, released by the Bush White House shortly after 9/11 which signaled the end of deterrence and initiated a policy of preemption against threats to be determined by the United States.

¹⁶ For a fuller discussion of these parallel themes as they relate to 9/11 see Tickner (2002).

¹⁷ El Fadl is quoting Tariq Ali (2002) who argues that American and European imperialism has created the fundamentalism of bin Laden and that American and European attitudes to Islam are no less fundamentalist than bin Laden’s.

Gendered and racialized discourses are being used on both sides of the “clash” to reinforce mutual hostilities. The linguistic use of “homeland,” a term first used by President Bush immediately following the 9/11 attacks, reinforces the sense of securing national boundaries while it produces a sense of radical insecurity with respect to a dangerous outside; it also carries racial overtones (Kaplan, 2003:59-61). The 2004 presidential election, in which each candidate’s primary focus was to prove his toughness and ability to provide military leadership in the face of terror, demonstrated a form of militarized masculinity that is back in vogue in the United States. A Manichean worldview, typical of both sides of the cultural conflict, depends on the reassertion of an aggressive form of militarized masculinity.¹⁸ While one can be skeptical as to whether one believes that “God is in the White House” as one Bush supporter suggested to *New York Times* reporter Ron Susskind (2004:51), the framing of foreign policy in these Manichean terms has serious consequences. It mirrors the forces of unreason against which we are purportedly waging war.

I have suggested that the reemergence of conservative religious movements, with their rhetoric of returning to traditional values has challenged the predictions of modernization theory. Their growing influence on the state and politics, even in secular societies, has confounded political analysis that looks to materialist explanations for political behavior. Understanding these trends, as well as their influence on foreign policies which are increasingly framed in religious terms, requires the IR discipline to pursue some new avenues as Keohane suggested.

¹⁸ I have elaborated on this argument in Tickner, 2002. I am use the term *masculinity* in the social constructivist sense. There are other forms of masculinity that are less aggressive. I am *not* suggesting that this type of masculinity is typical of all men – and certainly women can display these characteristics too.

Incorporating Religion into our Theories of International Relations

IR theory, particularly in the US, has been built on ontological foundations of a system of states rather than on social relations among people, an ontology that complicates the incorporation of religion into its theories. Daniel Philpott sees the origins of the secularism of international relations theory in what he calls the “Westphalian synthesis.” The Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, often termed the origin of the modern state system,¹⁹ signaled the defeat of religion not as a force in politics but as a scheme for organizing international authority. Denying the right of authorities to enforce religious practices outside their territory, Westphalia established the right of sovereign authorities to govern religion in their territory as they pleased, thus establishing state sovereignty and the norm of nonintervention (Philpott, 2002:73-74). Set in motion by the Protestant Reformation and the subsequent development of religious freedom, the separation of church and state resulted in the gradual secularization of the political realm.

The ontological assumptions of the Westphalian synthesis, together with the commitment to international relations as a social science, so central to the evolution of the U.S. IR discipline, have reinforced its neglect of religion and, more importantly, its inability to incorporate religion into its theories. In the 1980s, IR in the United States was dominated by neorealism and neoliberalism, neither of which was well equipped to explain major ideational world-transforming shifts that were occurring in the underlying foundations of world politics (Reus Smit, 2004:15-19). For realists, the state is a distinct political entity with its own logic; motivated by power and the will to survive, the goal of the state is its own security. Liberalism, which has emerged out of the Enlightenment

¹⁹ This claim has been the subject of an ongoing dispute. See for example Krasner (1993) and Teschke (2003).

tradition and which believes that states can cooperate in the rational pursuit of peace and prosperity has also been relentlessly secular. Social scientific theories of rational choice, which explain states' behavior in instrumentally self-interested rationalist terms, have further reinforced the secularism of these approaches (Philpott, 2002:80).

The radical revival of Islam has challenged the Westphalian synthesis. The ultimate goal of radical revivalists is the Islamization of the international political order - replacing the secular state with an Islamic system under God's rule. Non state groups claim authority for a people that are not self contained within a state but they also look to state institutions to promote Islam (Philpott, 2002:89). Support for Islamic movements are statist and transnational at the same time.²⁰ Given that the fundamental principles around which the state system is organized are being challenged, this presents a profound challenge to international relations theory. Secular rationalism is ill equipped to understand the mixed motivations, from the transcendental to the materialist, which characterize, not only radical Islam, but all the conservative religious movements that I have described.

Keohane (2002:272) suggested a role for both classical realism and constructivism in helping understand these religious worldviews. Keohane claims that, since it took seriously "the human desire to dominate or to hate," classical realism can help to understand religious violence. I suggest an additional more fundamental role for classical realism - to help understand deeper problems associated with the reaction against secular modernity and rationalism that I have described. Writing in the aftermath

²⁰ The Christian right in the United States tends to look to state institutions to promote Christianity and to see religion and the state as coincidental. Its support for the Iraq war and an imperial foreign policy (God and country) are indications of this. This is quite consistent with the Westphalian principle of *cuius region, cuius religio* and further complicates the Westphalian synthesis..

of World War II and deeply influenced by European fascism, Hans Morgenthau (1946) evoked themes that are strikingly similar to some of those already discussed in this paper.

In *Scientific Man Vs Power Politics*, Morgenthau pointed to a disillusionment with modernity and its association with secular rationalism, a disillusionment which, as I have indicated, is central to contemporary fundamentalist thinking in a variety of religions. Morgenthau disputed the liberal claim that, in a liberal society, reason, revealing itself in the law of economics, would reign and of necessity bring about harmony, the welfare of all, and world peace. Liberals believed that this would come about through reason which had its own inner force, not dependent on human intervention (Morgenthau, 1946:25). In a severe indictment of liberalism and rationalism, Morgenthau was strikingly pessimist about the ability of scientific reasoning to solve social problems. Suggesting that man's [sic] nature has three dimensions – the biological, the rational and the spiritual, he concluded that the rationalistic or instrumentalist conception of man, portrayed by liberal social science, has completely disregarded the emotional and spiritual aspects of life (Morgenthau, 1946:122).²¹ Disclaiming positivism's belief that the social world is subject to the same laws as the natural world, Morgenthau (1946:125) claimed that science may have allowed man to master nature but it has not answered the reason for man's existence. *Scientific Man Vs Power Politics* is a severe indictment of an attempt to construct a "scientific" theory of world politics. Nevertheless, as is evident in his other writings, it is a model to which he aspires. Morgenthau's rigid separation of rationality and emotion is itself a product of modern

²¹ For a feminist critique of Morgenthau's gendered language which claims that it is symptomatic of a deeper gendering of his analysis see Tickner (1988).

secular reasoning. For Morgenthau, rationality has the potential to overcome what he sees as dangerous emotions. I shall return to this later in the paper.

Scientific Man Vs Power Politics is grounded in the interpretive tradition, an intellectual approach that is closer to theology and to contemporary IR post positivist approaches than to realism's subsequent devolution to neorealism. In an essay whose goal is to develop what she calls an International Political Theology, Vendulka Kubáľková (2003:85-89) claims that it is not possible to study religion adequately in a positivist framework. Arguing for a rule-oriented constructivist approach, she asserts that there is a profound difference between positivist and religious understandings of the world. Indeed, positivists' reliance on logic and the positive evidence of the senses are seeking non religious foundations for secure knowledge. She advocates the shift to an insider's perspective in the search for knowledge. Such a perspective, characteristic of hermeneutic and postpositivist thought more generally, has religious antecedents in romanticism which originated in the late eighteenth century as a revolt against modern rationalism.²² Kubáľková (2003:85) states that, up until two hundred years ago, religions provided the dominant mode of thought, and many schools of thought, such as phenomenology and hermeneutics, have their roots in religion. The stress on identity, the inside/outside distinction, phenomenology, and hermeneutics, all characteristic of postpositivist thought has always been central to religious thought and practice. Thus postpositivist approaches to knowledge cumulation are likely to be better at understanding religious worldviews.

²² Romanticism focuses on the irrational and the nonrational and on feeling rather than thought (Kubáľková, 2003:85). It does, however, have a much more positive view of human nature than did Morgenthau

Religious and secular thought start from different ontologies – all religions share a distinction between ordinary and transcendental reality. Religious thinkers see human experience as only one dimension of a multidimensional reality that is ordered by design but is not knowable to sensory perception. Creating gods is a necessary feature of the human search for identity and transcendence. A believer must follow the dictates of conscience that are beyond the realm of “rational choice” (Kubáľková, 2003:86-90). While constructivism has also been secular, Kubáľková claims that approaching human action through linguistic constructivism - as a world created through human action and the meaning that humans give to their actions - is the methodological path by which we can incorporate religion into international relations. I agree with Kubáľková that linguistic constructivism is useful for understanding the religious worldviews I have described and for understanding contemporary events, for the way we construct our world is crucial to how we act upon it.²³

Kubáľková and Morgenthau both claim that fundamental questions about human existence cannot be answered in modern secular “scientific” terms. Both are searching for a way to understand human motivations which, as they suggest, are not adequately explainable in instrumental rationalist terms. Both are helpfully suggestive of some ways in which we need to rethink contemporary knowledge production in order to better understand religious worldviews. I shall now briefly suggest some contributions of some recent feminist writings which can deepen these analyses and add some further dimensions to this discussion. As I have demonstrated all conservative religions are

²³ Comparison of US responses to the attack on the World Trade Center in 1993, when five people were killed and approximately one thousand injured, and 9/11, where more than three thousand were killed, is illustrative of my argument. Whereas the 1993 attack was considered a crime, 9/11 was declared an act of war. These very different reactions were the result of the comparative levels of destruction rather than by the acts themselves which were motivated by similar goals (May, 2003:39).

deeply patriarchal. Feminist theologians have offered some important critiques of these patriarchal religious beliefs and practices and suggested some reconstructions and revisions of theology which are not only less patriarchal but which can also provide the bases for more benign less conflictual worldviews. Since feminists have also had a complicated relationship with modern secular knowledge-building, they have constructed useful critiques of the kind of secular rationalist thinking of which conservative religions are so critical and about which Morgenthau was so pessimistic. Certain feminists use a different form of non-instrumental dialogic rationality which can incorporate both religious and secular beliefs and which can provide an epistemological model more amenable to synthesis between religious and secular knowledge.

Some Feminist Critiques and Reconstructions

As I have indicated, gender and race are central to how the religious worldviews I have described are constructed. The conservative religious movements that I have discussed all express a frustration with modernity and a desire to return to “tradition” which is often defined in terms of returning women to their “traditional” place. Their definition of “tradition” is rigidly patriarchal, particularly with respect to family relations. The highest priority on the social agenda of American Christian protestant fundamentalists is the “return” to an idealized family where men are the breadwinners and women withdraw from paid employment – an arrangement which, they believe, is divinely ordained (Hardacre, 1993). As feminists have claimed, women are the bearers of culture and conservative movements that profess to be returning to cultural “authenticity” do so by enforcing strict codes of behavior on women.

Yet, as feminists have pointed out, the nuclear family with its expectations of a male “breadwinner” and a female who stays in the home and does not engage in paid labor is a middle class *modern* arrangement coincidental with the introduction of the division of labor, associated with the industrial revolution, between paid productive labor outside the home and unremunerated reproductive labor inside (Hardacre, 1993:131). It is not a “typical” family arrangement. Religious movements that advocate a return to “tradition” are misrepresenting what is meant by “tradition.” Religious leaders use religion selectively to enforce their own interests which they represent as God’s will. Since the leadership of all the major religions has been predominantly male, religion has frequently served to support patriarchal societal arrangements and the oppression of women.

Feminists engaged in the study of religion have offered important critiques of religious worldviews that emerge out of these deeply patriarchal beliefs and practices. Muslim feminists have claimed that, while Islam is being used as an instrument of oppression against Muslim women, this is because it is being interpreted by men to suit their purposes. Raffat Hassan suggests that there is no “fall” in the Qu’ran, hence no original sin, but the association of the fall with sexuality, which has played a massive role of perpetuating the myth of feminine evil in the Christian tradition, also exists in the minds of many Muslims. While most ahadith (sayings attributed to Mohammad) describe a virtuous woman as one who pleases and obeys her husband, there are no Qur’anic statements which justify the rigid restrictions that have been imposed on women in the name of Islam (Hassan, 1999: 260). When Muslim women fight for their rights, they are frequently accused of betraying their religion and culture and of becoming Western.

Indeed, for Islamic feminists, modernity itself is problematic because it is equated with being Western. Rather than reject Islam altogether, Islamic feminists are attempting to reconstruct an alternative reading of Islam that is less patriarchal and does not endorse the disempowerment of women.

Christian feminist theology has also engaged in both critical analysis of conventional texts and in a constructive re-reading of texts, both of which involve an awareness of the ambivalence that religious texts have created for women. Quaker Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the author of *The Women's Bible* who struggled for women's liberation in the second half of the nineteenth century, argued that interpretation by male theologians and clerics was flawed since it was based on the false assumption of male domination and female inferiority (Watson, 2003:7). Feminist theologians, following a practice in feminist methodology more generally, question the assumption that there can be a gender neutral "universal" person who reads a text from an "objective" point of view. A feminist reader of the Scripture assumes a reflexive attitude – that the gender, race and socio-economic status of the reader must be taken into consideration. Feminist theologians also question the selection of texts which have become part of the canon; a feminist reading of the Scripture is not a reading that focuses only on the content of the Scripture as authoritative but a hermeneutic one that emphasizes the interactive process of reading, a process that creates meaning for those who participate in the Christian community as the people they are (Watson, 2003:7-11).

Feminist theologians in the Christian tradition have drawn inspiration from, but gone beyond, liberation theology, a radical Christian tradition which emerged in the Black U.S. and Latin American Catholic churches in the 1970s and 1980s. Liberation

theology believes that marginalized and oppressed peoples must participate in constructing their own religious thinking out of their lives and experiences (Watson, 2003:1). Rather than invoking the authority of texts selected by religious hierarchies, liberation theology involves a form of knowledge-building whereby ordinary people come to understand religion through engagement in a dialogic process. Constructing worldviews is reflective, ongoing and emergent. It is consistent with a sense of empathy and compassion – *to feel with*, which Karen Armstrong (2004. 295) suggests is as pivotal in all Abrahamic religious traditions as are the belligerent elements emphasized by fundamentalists.

Feminists in both the Islamic and Christian traditions are trying to develop a theology that does not rely on selective readings of texts that claim the authority and certitude of a “tradition” which is hierarchically ordered and repressive. But they are also striving to develop a theology that gets beyond the problems that modernity, especially modern knowledge, has created for women. While women bear the burdens of the enforcement of “traditional” religious values which express a deep hostility to modern secularism, women have also had an ambiguous and complicated relationship with modernity and secular rationalism. While modernity has brought benefits to many women including education, political participation, and economic improvements, modern conceptions of work and family have been built on structural relationships, such as the division of labor, that are hierarchical and unequal. Women have rarely been the subjects or producers of knowledge, secular or religious. Modern knowledge with its claims to universality and objectivity has generally been constructed by men from knowledge of men’s lives. Modern knowledge depends on the Cartesian separation of the intellect and

the emotion. These are hierarchically ordered and gendered where the mind is associated with men and emotions with women and where, as Morgenthau claims, it is the task of (masculine) reason to tame dangerous (female) emotions. Feminists believe that emotion and intellect are mutually constitutive and sustaining and that emotions can be a positive as well as a negative force. Karen Armstrong (2004, 294) claims that, since the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, even Western theology has been characterized by inappropriate reliance on reason. Western people began to talk about God as an objective demonstrable fact. This has reinforced the tendency to impose dogmatic religious beliefs that are causing many of today's problems.

For feminists, rationality is contextual and emergent out of social relations in which the individual is embedded. Contextualized rationality whereby the producer of knowledge is reflexive of her or his role in the production of knowledge is a more robust ideational foundation from which to build less conflictual worldviews. Many secular feminists also advocate a dialogic contextual model of knowledge building whereby knowledge emerges through conversations with texts and subjects.²⁴ Brooke Ackerly (2000) builds on, but goes beyond, democratic political theory in designing a deliberative democratic model of social criticism which she defines as an ongoing process to bring about incremental uncoerced models of social change (Ackerly, 2000:14). Working with rural women and activists in Bangladesh, Ackerly constructs a framework which combines scholarship with action. She argues that effecting social change must come, not just from theorists, but from the experiences of those whose lives are impacted by injustices which they seek to remedy. Participants in such a dialogue are not theorists or elites but ordinary individuals who must have mutual respect and equal ability to

²⁴ For a discussion of dialogic feminist methodologies for international relations see Tickner (2005)

influence outcomes. Analogous to processes used by liberation theologians, she recounts meetings among rural women and activists who use stories, analogies and emotions in non-institutionalized settings to construct better understanding of their situations in order to change them. Committed to building knowledge through an interactive dialogic process which includes multiple voices, rather than to discovering some objective universal truth, such knowledge could not only provide a useful foundation for the construction of less conflictual worldviews but also contribute to building a synthesis between religious and secular thinking.

Conclusion

Keohane issued his challenge to IR theorists to take other worldviews, including religious worldviews, more seriously if we are to understand the roots of what he calls “informal” violence. I have suggested that worldviews of those who commit violence in the name of religion are symptomatic of more general frustrations with secularism and modernity and with a desire to “return” to tradition. Understanding these religious worldviews requires building knowledge that is itself critically reflective of secular rationalism – a form of knowledge that is unable to explain religious motivations. As IR scholars we need to be more reflective about our role in the construction of secular theory which, as Keohane suggests, is not well equipped to understand recent events or their wider implications. I have suggested some ways in which insights from classical realism, linguistic constructivism, and feminist theology are useful for such an endeavor. I have also outlined some feminist writings, both religious and secular, which offer a radical rewriting of religion and more synthetic forms of knowledge-building, both of which

could provide the basis for the construction of less conflictual worldviews. Dialogic, reflexive forms of knowledge can produce greater understanding of the “other’s” religious beliefs, an understanding that, as Karen Armstrong’s epigraph at the beginning of this paper suggests, may no longer be merely desirable but necessary for our very survival.

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