Islamic Secularization in the West

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ABSTRACT

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This paper critically examines the prospect of an Islamic secularization in the Western context, ultimately arguing that religious orthodoxy in general is not likely to survive in a liberal democratic context. By examining the current economic, political, and social conditions of Muslims living in Western Europe and the United States, this paper will first argue that despite numerous obstacles, Muslims are generally willing and able to be active participants in a Western, liberal democratic context. Later, a theoretical foundation for secularization is presented, according to which the secularization process can be defined as loss of religious authority. This paper asserts that the loss of religious authority in the liberal democratic context is achieved through the rationalization process, which socially legitimizes non-religious alternatives. Lastly, it will be asserted that secularization is achievable in a religious context, using the advent of Reform Judaism as a historical example. Bearing this in mind, this paper argues that Islamic religious authority is likely to wane in the West, and that religious orthodoxy in general will struggle to survive in a liberal democratic, pluralistic context.
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I. Introduction

Can religious orthodoxy, defined as strict adherence to religious authority, survive in a liberal democratic context? This is the main theoretical question to be answered in this thesis. According to the central argument presented in this paper, by legitimizing non-orthodox and non-religious alternatives, liberal democracy exerts a secularizing pressure on any and all kinds of religious orthodoxy, subsequently delegitimizing the authority of traditional religious institutions, hierarchies, and scripture over the individual. To demonstrate this process, this paper shall focus on Sunni Muslims living in Western Europe and the United States, for they constitute an ideal case study as a large, generally orthodox religious community that entered liberal democratic space relatively recently. First, a Weberian theoretical foundation for secularization will be presented and the important terms will be defined, to later allow for an informed analysis of the current, evident transformations in Western Islam, followed by a discussion regarding Islam’s likely future development in the West. Specifically, by analyzing the current status of Muslims immigrants in the West today, by showing Islam’s historic and theoretical capacity to accommodate for liberal individualistic values, and by comparing and contrasting its case with the secularizing transformations that Judaism underwent upon arrival in the United States, this paper will assert that religious orthodoxy is most likely unsustainable in a liberal democratic context, in the long run, and that religious identity in general is likely to be increasingly defined in cultural terms; that religious faith will most likely be maintained under liberal democracy - stripped, however, from the influence of religious authority over the believer.
There are over 1.5 billion Muslims in the world today - around 23 percent of the world population - a little less than 90 percent of which are Sunni.\(^1\) Islam was founded by the Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century in the Arabian Peninsula (modern day Saudi Arabia). In addition to his religious teachings, Muhammad was also the political and military leader of the early Muslims, leading them in battle and territorial conquest. Shortly after Muhammad’s death, the future of Islamic spiritual and political leadership was debated among the Sahaba, Muhammad’s companions, and the Caliphate was formally established, led by the democratically elected (although not uncontroversially) Abu Bakr, the first Caliph.\(^2\) Less than thirty years later, at the end of the reign of the fourth Caliph, the Muslim Empire spanned from modern day Libya to Afghanistan. By 783, the Grand Mosque was built in Cordoba, (modern-day) Spain.\(^3\)

Naturally, the Muslim world - geographically defined as the collection of countries with Muslim majorities - is vast, loosely correlating with old borders of the Islamic Empires, at their largest extent. In the 21st century, however, Islam is no longer confined to those geographical boundaries, for migration has spread Muslims throughout the world. Millions of Muslims now live in the Western world, and that offers us an opportunity to answer two important questions: what happens to highly religious communities when they migrate from what some may consider non-liberal states to a new, liberal democratic context (working definitions for those charged terms to be provided shortly)? And, most importantly: if the trend is to secularize, why so? What drives this process? In order to be able to answer those questions, then, this thesis will focus exclusively on Muslims living in Western contexts.

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\(^3\) Rodriguez, Jarbel. *Muslim and Christian Contact in the Middle Ages: A Reader*, 41
Often times, the story of Islam in the West is seen through Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” lens, which will be mentioned more extensively later on in this paper, according to which “the fundamental source of conflict in this new [post- Cold War] world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. ... the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations.”

Although Huntington’s thesis can be interpreted in a few different ways, it is commonly employed by those who assert that Islam is inherently incompatible with the West and its values. This paper will argue against this notion by showing that a liberal and pluralistic Islam has existed in the past and can develop today; that Islam is not inherently incompatible with liberal democratic values.

The media, for example, often times choose to focus on religious extremism: we hear much about radical Islamic cells in Europe and radicalized young European Muslims joining terrorist organizations like the Islamic State. The Issue of Islam’s arrival in the West is often times - perhaps too often - seen through this lens, which some misuse to argue for cultural incompatibility. They say that Islamic values inherently oppose Western values. We tend to either focus on Muslims’ unwillingness to “assimilate” or the West’s failure to “integrate” Muslims, and on the threat of Islamic terrorism. Often times, the debate about Islam and Muslims’ immigration to Europe is centred around the question of de-radicalizing Muslim youth, or about understanding the process of Islamic radicalization in the West, which is indeed a strange phenomenon considering many of those young radicals had relatively comfortable lives in Europe (certainly more comfortable than the lives they or their parents had in their country of origin). Nevertheless, this thesis shall focus on the vast majority of Muslims who shy away from extremism, yet choose to preserve their

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religious and cultural identity as Muslims. Specifically, it will explore the probable future of Islam as a religion, and Muslim believers in general, in the Western context. What does the future of this faith look like, in the West? What kinds of pressures does the West - specifically, liberal democracy - exert on Islam?

As mentioned earlier, Islam is inherently decentralized and fragmented. In his book, *Islam: A Very Short Introduction*, Malise Ruthven writes that: “There is no 'church' in Islam, no formally instituted body empowered to supervise or dictate the religious agenda, to articulate an 'official' Islamic view comparable to that of the Papacy or the appointed or elected leadership of Protestant denominations.” For most of Islam’s history, the fragility of having no centralized religious leadership was maintained by the different Caliphates, which took upon themselves the task of guiding Muslims politically and religiously, acting as Islam’s vanguard, if you will. However, since the fall of the last widely-recognized Caliphate - the Ottoman Empire - in the early 20th century, there has been no Islamic leadership that enjoyed this kind of legitimacy and consensus. This problem is tightly woven into the political problems of the Muslim world, but the implications are not merely political. What does it mean to be a Muslim? How strictly should the Quran be read? Is Islam compatible with modernity? In the days of the Caliphates, those questions had clearer answers. But they are much harder to answer today than they were even just a hundred years ago.

The rise of the so called Islamic State, the regional power struggle between the Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran, their proxy war in Yemen, the rise of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism, and even the subsequent “War on Terror,” are all indicative of this crisis of leadership. Those organizations and states are all, in a sense, attempting to define what it means to be a Muslim in

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their own terms - be it the “Islamic State” by violent enforcement of Islamic law (as they read it), Saudi Arabia by actively promoting their own Wahhabi branch of Islam (an ultra-conservative branch of Hanbali Sunni Islam which, according to Ethan Rundell and Nabil Mouline, “amounts to nothing more or less than strict observance of orthodoxy and orthopraxy in conformity with Hanbali doctrine.”6), or Iran’s close relationship between Shia Islam and politics embodied by its “Guardian Council.”

Many commentators have predicted a rapid decline in Muslim religiosity in the Western context (at least for second and third generation immigrants), but when we look at current data this trend is hard to identify. This has led to a reactionary round of speculation that Muslims will maintain their high levels of religiosity in the Western context, preferring to define themselves primarily as Muslims rather than European, Americans, French, etc. Yet, despite popular attention’s focus on those branches of “orthodox” Islam and their effects on both the Middle East and the West, this thesis will show that there also exist organizations and leaders attempting to move away from orthodoxy and modernize Islam yet maintain it as a religious identity. Furthermore, this thesis will show that those organizations are most influential in the West, especially in the United States.

Before we move on, we should first spend some time clarifying our terms. First, for the purposes of this thesis, when we talk about the West we shall refer specifically to Western Europe and the United States. There is plenty of data about Muslims in those two central components of the Western world. Muslims’ religious practices, their opinions, their demographic makeup, and their socioeconomic status are all well recorded. This is not so much the case for other parts of what may be considered the “Western world” like Oceania, parts of Latin America, Japan, etc.

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Furthermore, this thesis attempts to show the stress that liberal democracy exerts on orthodoxy, yet, it is hard to make a clear separation between liberal democratic states and non-liberal democracies. Few people will argue, however, that the United States and Western European states are not liberal democracies, so focusing on them exclusively is also a way to ensure the social framework fits our hypothesis.

“Liberal democracy” should here be taken at its face value, referring to democratic states that display liberal values. This thesis does not argue that democracy as a governing mechanism are inherently secularizing. Instead, this thesis will show that a special combination of different traditions, norms, political attitudes, and material conditions exists in liberal democratic space that delegitimize religious authority (but not religion itself). Additionally, this thesis will demonstrate the historical connection between the capitalist state of mind that exists in all liberal democracies, or, it’s rationalizing “spirit”, and the religious transformations that Judaism underwent in the United States, in order to prove that the rationalization and privatization of religion (and everything else) result in a decline in religious authority. I shall argue that Islam is likely to follow this trend as well, despite it being slower than previously expected.

Additionally, Muslim “orthodoxy” - a useful term which will be used quite frequently - will refer to the well-established, mainstream, traditional strands of Sunni Islam: The Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki and Shafi’i schools. This choice of words is not uncontroversial, but it works well for the purposes of this thesis, for mainstream Islam strongly encourages strict readings of the Quran and Hadiths, while allowing for very little personal interpretation or flexibility. Shia Islam shall be omitted for the sake of simplicity and due to the constraints of this project, but in terms of declining religiosity in the West, the story is much the same: although here I should at least note that Shia Islam’s story in its home territory- in Iran, for example - is very different in terms of
religious authority and also in the attitude towards the role of Islam in politics. In a sense, then, it could be argued that Sunni Islam is orthodox in the same way it might be argued that Catholicism is orthodox, due to their demand from the believer to closely follow scripture and obey religious authority. In both cases, considerable power is vested in religious authorities, in the sense that there is very little room for personal adjustments to the faith, and in the sense that the authority of religious leaders and institutions over the common believer is strong. Once more: this is an unconventional terminology, for many scholars refrain from using “orthodoxy” when talking about Islam, but I find it not only accurate in describing strict adherence to creed, but useful in distinguishing between traditionalists and progressives.

This paper is particularly interested in the possibility of a secularizing reformation in Islam. However, such trends are quite hard to predict. Instead, this paper will focus on secularization as a trend which, defined as a decline in religious authority, can occur without necessarily abandoning the faith altogether; as a trend that can occur while maintaining a religious identity. I shall define religious authority in the terms used above; as the power that religious institutions and scholars have over believers’ lives, relying extensively on Charles Taylor’s work in his book “A Secular Age.” As we shall see, this definition of reformation as declining religious authority is historically appropriate. We shall dive deeper into this discussion later on in this thesis, but for now it will suffice to say that secularization, for us, should be equated with a decline in the authority of religious institutions and the dismantlement of religious hierarchies. This paper will also make sure to distinguish between these kinds of secularizing trends, which by no means refer exclusively to a total abandonment of a religion, and the phenomenon of leaving a faith altogether.

Now that the basic terms have been clarified, we can begin setting the framework for exploring religious change among Muslims in the West. First, in the next chapter, this paper will
discuss what we know about Muslims living in the West today - both in Western Europe and in the U.S. Once their demographics, religious preferences, and political inclinations have been analyzed, we shall move on to laying down a theoretical foundation of secularization in a Western democratic context. Ultimately, this paper will show that the liberal democratic context delegitimizes religious authority by making nonreligious ways of life socially and legally acceptable, through the process of rationalization – exerting a pressure on Muslim orthodoxy and making it likely for Islam to secularize in the West.
II. Muslims in the West

Before laying down the theoretical foundations of my argument, we should first take a close look at the current demographics, attitudes, and material conditions of Muslims in the West. As of 2015, there are around 3.3 million Muslims living in the U.S, or around 1 percent of the U.S population. Estimating the total Muslim population in Europe is problematic, because of our focus on Western Europe (and the existence of native, European Muslim populations in Eastern and Southern Europe). As of 2015, the countries with the largest Muslim populations in Western Europe are Germany (4.7 million), France (4.7 million), the United Kingdom (3 million) and Italy (2.2 million), corresponding to 5.8, 7.5, 4.8 and 3.7 percent of the population, respectively. As a reminder, it should be noted that any generalization about Muslims’ attitudes and beliefs can be dangerous, for, as we have noted, if one thing can be said with absolute certainty about Muslims is that they are a highly diverse community. Furthermore, in Europe particularly, different countries have different shares of migrants from different countries of origin, which can play a role in shaping their opinions, beliefs and practices. Due to this, this paper will focus on three main issues: the financial stability of Muslims in Europe and the U.S, their religious preferences, and their levels of integration into European and American society.

The information presented here about Muslim Americans’ attitudes, political opinions, habits, and daily experience might be surprising, to the uninformed. The initial expectation was for this community, which has been at the center of many public debates after 9-11, their allegiances questioned, to be dissatisfied with life in the U.S, and for them to be on the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. The reality on the ground, however, is not so simple. First and foremost: Muslims Americans are not very different than the general American public. According to a PEW Research Center report from 2011 titled Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism, Muslim Americans share many of their preferences and behaviors with the general American public. The report, which surveyed 1,033 Muslim Americans, found, to begin with the anecdotal examples: that 48 percent of Muslim Americans watch college or professional football, 44 percent display the American flag, and 19 percent play video games.9 The corresponding percentages for the general American public are 62 percent, 59 percent and 19 percent, respectively. Once more: for the uninformed, this might come as a surprise, for one would expect Muslim Americans, the vast majority of whom are relatively recent arrivals as compared to the general U.S population, to have different preferences and attitudes for, say, raising the American flag. Although this data in particular is quite trivial, it goes a long way in dispelling the myth that those migrants live in closed-off communities that resemble their countries of origin; that Muslims in the U.S are essentially different than other Americans. Percentages for other activities and behaviors were also very similar. 69 percent of Muslim Americans said that religion is “very important in their lives”, as compared to 70 percent of Christian Americans. 47 percent of Muslims in the U.S attend worship services weekly, as compared to 45 percent of Christians.

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Second, according to the same report, Muslim Americans are on average much more satisfied with life in the U.S than the general public, and they report higher levels of personal satisfaction with life in general: 56 percent of the surveyed Muslim Americans reported being “satisfied with the way things are going in the US”, as compared to only 23 percent of the general public.\(^\text{10}\) 82 percent of the surveyed Muslim Americans reported being “satisfied with the way things are going in their life today” as compared to 75 percent of the general public.\(^\text{11}\) Again, some may consider these results surprising, for the reasons noted above: namely, that as recent arrivals and as members of a faith which has been under scrutiny, one might expect Muslim Americans to be relatively less satisfied with life in the U.S as compared to the general population. Additionally, after 9-11, one would expect Muslims in the U.S to feel threatened, even if this is an untrue perception, as the data suggests. Yet they are on average very satisfied with their lives. These data suggest either that Muslims have successfully integrated into American society, or that they are satisfied with their lives despite living in isolated communities. As we shall see, it seems that the former explanation better fits the data.

As a relatively new migrant group, the original working hypothesis for this paper was for Muslim Americans to feel less financially secure than the average American, because of the economic difficulties so often faced by immigrants. But this too turned out to be a false expectation. According to the same study:

U.S. Muslims are about as likely to report household incomes of $100,000 or more as are other Americans (14% of Muslims, compared with 16% of all adults). But differences emerge in the middle of the scale: 40% of Muslim Americans report family incomes between $30,000 and $100,000, compared with 48% of the general public. And a higher

\(^{10}\) Ibid, 3  
\(^{11}\) Ibid
percentage of Muslim Americans than the general public report that their annual household earnings are less than $30,000 (45% among Muslims, 36% among the general public).\textsuperscript{12}

The report then contextualizes the disparity on the lower income levels, explaining that this pattern is also visible in other migrant and marginalized communities:

One possible explanation for the deterioration may be that the bursting of the housing market bubble in 2006 and the recession that followed from late 2007 to mid-2009 disproportionately affected the young, largely immigrant and racially diverse Muslim American population, much as the sub-prime mortgage crisis and the recession hurt blacks and Hispanics more than it did the general public.\textsuperscript{13}

The picture this report paints is of a satisfied American community, which largely conforms to the general public’s attitudes, values, and furthermore, of a financially stable community. Later, we will have to analyze these data to see what makes Muslim Americans relatively successful in America, and whether there are differences between American and European Muslims’ financial security.

In his influential book from 2006, \textit{American Islam: The Struggle for the Soul of a Religion}, Paul Barrett takes a deeper, more intimate look at Muslims in America. In a series of interviews, Barrett paints a picture of the Muslim American community, emphasizing its diversity and its relative success. Commenting on this community’s successes, he writes: “Middle-class income, a college graduation rate on par with that of the larger population, an inclination to vote that is impressive for a mostly immigrant group - all of these are indications of a minority population


successfully integrating into the larger society. By comparison, immigrant Muslims in countries such as Britain, France, Holland, and Spain have remained poorer, less well educated, and socially marginalized.”  

Is this really the case? If so, why is there such a difference between the American and European Muslims? What can we learn from those differences? These questions will play an increasingly important role later on in this paper, for the answers to those questions can shed light on the relationship between the rationalization of all aspects of society and decreased religiosity. But first we must see whether the differences between Muslims in America and Europe are indeed so stark.

In her book, *Islamic Challenge: Politics and Religion in Western Europe* Klausen explores the relationship between European Muslims and European society (specifically, with liberal individualism) by interviewing elected Muslim leaders. Klausen looks at Muslims in Europe in light of Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” thesis, interviewing leaders to see whether such a clash of civilizations in fact reflects the reality on the ground. In fact, the issue of Muslim immigration is often framed in terms of cultural incompatibility in Europe, which is quite different than the way it is framed in the U.S. Her book, much like Barrett’s, attempts to paint a personal portrait of the European Muslims, focusing on their legitimately elected leaders as examples of Muslims in Europe - their constituents. We should start with the similarities: both books conclude, first and foremost, that it is implausible - perhaps even impossible - to say anything about Muslims’ attitudes generally. Indeed, if one thing can be said about Muslims in the U.S and Europe, is that those are diverse, heterogeneous communities, with various ethnic and political backgrounds. The most notable difference between European and American Muslims, however, is their relationship with the state. In Europe, Muslim immigration is treated as a public issue - a problem that requires

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solving, while in the U.S, the government neither funds nor regulates religious organizations. Furthermore, in Europe, attempts to alleviate extremism are not just seen as the concern of the state’s security apparatus, like in the U.S - in Europe, it is not uncommon for states to actively finance moderate mosques and religious leaders. For example, Klausen writes: “After a group of young Muslims was caught plotting to plant bombs in London, the British government proposed a plan - unwisely named ‘Operation Contest’ - to fund the activities of moderate Islamic intellectuals and generally to encourage the development of a moderate Islam.”

Klausen goes on to state that “The Muslim leaders with whom I met expressed a variety of views on the proper relationship between Islam and the state, but with few exceptions all were realists. Their common premise is that Islam is a minority religion in Europe, and that Muslims must find their place within the framework of liberal democracy.” This is, once more, the attitude of Muslim leaders, and should by no means be taken as a reflection of all Muslims’ attitudes in Europe. Nevertheless, it provides us with an important insight into this community, and it certainly has some validity, for Klausen specifically chose democratically elected leaders, and chose a wide variety of individuals to interview, reflecting different political, ethnic, and specific religious affiliations. Klausen’s portfolio focuses generally on Islamic extremism, and she also set this book, in part, with the task of debunking the myth of mass Islamic fundamentalism on European soil. Those terrorist “cells”, she argues, represent a very small minority of Muslims in Europe: “... for the overwhelming majority of Muslim leaders, democracy was not a means but an end. Their views and policy preferences do not derive from faith or theology. They are the product of individual negotiation, choice and contextual adaptation.” Now, this should not come as a great surprise:

16 Ibid, 205.
17 Ibid
after all, it is fair to assume that the vast majority of citizens in general are willing participants, and are generally moderate. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Muslims in Europe may not want to involve religion with politics - that they support the separation of religion from political institutions. In her final remarks, Klausen concludes that “It is misleading to see all this as a straightforward confrontation between Western governments and Muslim populations. There is a four-way conflict, with secular, and sometimes anticlerical, Christians and Muslims on the one side and, on the other side, religious Muslims and Christians.” Muslims in Europe, then, have largely embraced liberal values, and ultimately, the problem in Europe is less about Islam specifically, but a more fundamental dilemma about the relationship between religious and state institutions.

When looking at the larger picture, both European and American Muslims seem to have embraced liberal values, and both communities seem to want to actively participate in the social frameworks to which they entered. The story that emerges is of different Muslim communities, inherently diverse, that are ready and willing to socially participate in very different kinds of liberal democratic frameworks. The U.S and Western Europe have strong differences in government and political norms – especially in the line drawn between the public and the private spheres – not to mention the different political norms and traditions between European states. Yet one constant emerges – that the Muslim communities in all of those cases are, by and large, willing to integrate into a liberal democratic framework.

This is, once more, not so surprising: after all, those communities migrate by choice more often than not (although the current refugee crisis in Europe might complicate this issue). European Muslims, however, are generally less well-educated than American Muslims, and less financially

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18 Ibid, 221
stable, partly due to the fact that Europe is closer to the Muslim world than the US. The ticket is, quite simply, cheaper, so Europeans usually get more refugees, less-educated, poorer Muslims. In a study by David Voas and Fenella Fleischmann to which we shall return, they conclude that: “Postcolonial, labor, or refugee migration brought Muslims to Western Europe and Australia, generally from rural areas of less developed countries where religiosity is higher than in the receiving societies. Muslim immigrants to the United States tend to be more educated and prosperous.”\textsuperscript{19} In other words: Muslims in Europe are not failing to integrate because of Islam, but because of their socioeconomic background. This, coupled with the discrimination they face, makes them more likely to try to conserve their traditional religious practices. They are more likely to end up in closed neighborhoods, to rely on each other, and therefore to preserve their original religious and cultural identities. Muslims in Europe, as we said, want to participate in the social and political life of their receiving countries, but they simply face more obstacles towards assimilation than Muslims in the U.S. The differences between those communities are not essential. So why have we not seen a substantial decline in religiosity among those Muslim communities, especially in Europe, despite their general acceptance of liberal democratic values?

To answer this question, this paper will first lay down a theoretical foundation for secularization, in order to later be able to focus more sharply on those communities’ secularization in the Western context.

III. Historical Materialism and Rationalization: the Structural Foundations of Secularization?

Something special happened to the West in the 18th century. Scholars often throw about terms like the scientific revolution, the enlightenment, the rise of modern political ideologies, the rise of liberalism, the explosive emergence of capitalism, and the industrial revolution all too carelessly to describe the undoubtedly peculiar, unprecedented transformations that occurred around that century. In fact, it is surprisingly hard to find one term that accurately refers to all of those transformations collectively, but, for the purposes of this essay, let us refer to this set of transformations as part of modernization.\(^{20}\) One noticeable effect of Europe’s modernization is a sudden wave of secularization, a new phenomenon that was of particular interest to early sociologists like Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. In addition to secularization, both Weber and Durkheim, two of the earliest sociologists, noted the peculiarities of capitalism, placing great emphasis on the cultural foundations for its development. For Karl Marx, also credited as one of the earliest sociologists, capitalism was but a step – a rather large one - in a longer march of struggle between classes. This chapter will focus on Marx and Weber particularly, for, as it will be shown, their views on social development, the advent of capitalism, and consequently, secularization, are interconnected and shall serve as the theoretical foundation for this thesis.

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\(^{20}\) I ask the reader to leave behind the charged connotations that this term may give rise to - instead, I urge you to think of it simply and solely as the set of unprecedented processes that Europe underwent in the 17th and 18th centuries; as referring to the move from post-classical to modern society.
Those three early sociologists had slightly different ideas about the processes that gave rise to the emergence of modern society. In this chapter, it will be argued that although the Marxian, historically materialistic view of social development is immensely useful, Weber’s theory about the emergence of modern societies is much more holistic, for Weber’s account goes much further in explaining the arguably forgotten cultural foundations of capitalism. Yet, this chapter will also show that the two are not mutually exclusive. In effect, Weber’s ideas showed that the processes that Marx and Durkheim focused on - the rise of capitalism and industrialization - are mere symptoms of a larger, continuous process of rationalization. By looking at the religious transformations that the West underwent first, and asking what processes contributed to led to them, they were each able to gain some important insight on the nature of modern Western culture: particularly, that the material, social, religious and economic transformations of the 18th century were but a (rather large) step in an ongoing process of rationalization which could be traced back much farther than the 18th century. A competing, earlier view of secularization was given by Karl Marx, who refined Hegel’s ideas about history in general, creating what we now call “historical materialism” as a process that explains the development of societies. In this chapter, this paper shall first look at Marx’s ideas about religion, secularization, and social development in general, and compare them to Weber’s. Although the two are not necessarily incompatible, this paper shall conclude that the Weberian analysis of social development under capitalism - namely, that we live in an age defined by ever increasing rationalization - is a better candidate for explaining the process of secularization. Then, bearing this in mind, we shall take a look at the contemporary debate surrounding secularization, laying down the theoretical foundations of this paper, so we could later apply this to Islam’s likely courses of development in the West.
What makes communities lose their religiosity, be it by abandoning their religions altogether or as part of a larger process of gradual decline in religious belief? Let us begin with Marx’s ideas about social progress. Marx offers us with a historical and sociological methodology, according to which material conditions - most importantly, the modes of production - define the historical path and the current state of social relations in any given society. But, the concept is quite misunderstood, so let us first make sure we define it well. Marx himself never used the term “historical materialism”. Instead, he referred to his own (as opposed to Hegel’s) “dialectic method”, and sometimes said that his own (again, as opposed to Hegel’s) had a “materialistic basis”. Generally speaking, it was Friedrich Engels who painstakingly systematized Marx’s methodology after his death, which was not an easy task, as it was never properly defined by him, scattered across many “historically specific” writings. In the introduction to his *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, Engels provides us with one of the best contemporary definition of historical materialism:

> [Historical materialism] designate[s] that view of the course of history which seeks the ultimate cause and great moving power of all important historic events in the economic development of society, in the changes in the modes of production and exchange, in the consequent division of society into distinct classes, and in the struggle of these classes against one another.

This is an inherently modern, structuralist view of history, for it seeks a “great moving power”; an underlying causal mechanism that operates in the background.

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22Ibid
For Marx, the underlying moving power in any given society, throughout history, are its modes of production. His “materialism”, then, should not be confused with philosophical materialism, according to which everything is derived from the physical world. His own materialism refers to the specific material conditions in a society, and attempts to explain social progress (and nothing more). Marx would, for example, explain the trend of secularization in Europe (and modernization in general) by pointing towards changes in material conditions - technological advancements that led to changes in the modes of production and consumption - which created an explosion in productive capacity that, in turn, changed social relations to their core. What tools are available collectively? What do a society’s modes of production and exchange look like? The answers to those questions define the social relations in a given society, according to Marx. I suspect that if Marx was alive today, he would emphasize the everlasting class struggle in any given society (the static feature of history so far), for, after all, that is what he so harshly criticized; yet it is clear from his writings that he saw the development of capitalism as an inherently new thing; that he too recognized and studied, primarily, the transformations that came with modernization.

Yet Marx did not explicitly predict a mass secularization in his time. Marx thought that religion was an indicator for oppression - that religion’s purpose was to give happiness to the oppressed - and he believed that society in his own time was still filled with oppression. He did not predict religion’s disappearance under capitalism, only its appropriation by the ruling elites. In a famous passage from his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, he wrote that: “Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul
of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.”24 Nevertheless, we must not forget, as many commentators do, that despite Marx’s harsh criticisms of capitalism he was at the same time acutely aware of the great progress that humanity as a whole achieved through this new system: “[Capitalism] has been the first to show what man’s activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former Exoduses of nations and crusades.”25 In other words: stepping back to view human progress on a larger timeline, Marx would have not been surprised with Europe’s secularization, for it simply followed that, with this great leap forward brought by capitalism in terms of economic development and social betterment, so must social relations and institutions progress, hand in hand. Modernization, for Marx, was an all-encompassing process.

But Marx did not pay much attention to shifting cultural norms as serious “great movers”, to use Engel’s definition of historical materialism. To reiterate: for Marx, history marches forward, driven by material changes. Not the other way around. But, as opposed to Marx, Max Weber thought that changes in material conditions are insufficient in explaining the rise of capitalism. From Weber’s perspective, there is a deep cultural component to this change. He started by asking - why did modern industrial capitalism happen in the West, and not in the Orient? And why was it particularly successful in Northern Europe? Weber argued that the ascetic spirit associated with Protestantism (Calvinism, particularly) played the most important role in creating the fertile ground from which capitalism sprouted. Calvinism, Weber argues, is a radical departure from the Catholic doctrine, in several important ways. Weber argued that Calvinism had the effect of

ridding the world of magic - a process he calls “disenchantment.” Calvinists preached individualism, arguing that any and all work is holy, as opposed to the Catholics who put no special religious significance on ordinary work. Furthermore, for Protestants in general but for Calvinists especially, there is no longer a salvation mechanism in our own world; there is no confession process where a priest can absolve one of his sins and give him peace of mind. A good Calvinist, then, has to wait until the afterlife to discover if he deserves to go to heaven, has to work very hard to please the Lord, and, on top of that, does not believe that he can be saved by a miracle. It is a hard, ascetic life: “This, the complete elimination of salvation through the Church and the sacraments (which was in Lutheranism by no means developed to its final conclusions), was what formed the absolutely decisive difference from Catholicism.”

Weber did not think that capitalism is a Calvinist phenomenon. Instead he argued that Calvinism created the ascetic fertile ground for capitalism’s growth, by creating an alternative ethical system which was constitutive for the capitalist’s mind-set and behavior. Weber argued that, ultimately, the most important outcome of this ascetic spirit was the rationalization of all aspects of life. Capitalism, then, is a more rationalized, disenchanted version of pre-industrial economies. Weber was fascinated by this process of rationalization, even writing essays about the impact rationalization had on music and the Jewish rationalization of moral codes (more on this in the next chapter). He says that “The Puritan, like every rational type of asceticism, tried to enable a man to maintain and act upon his constant motives, especially those which it taught him itself, against the emotions.” Puritanical asceticism, he argues, can be seen as the rationalization of our very motives. He quotes Benjamin Franklin, to give a vivid example of this asceticism: “Remember that time is money. He that can earn ten shillings a day by his labour, and goes abroad,

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27 Ibid, 73
or sits idle, one half of that day, though he spends but sixpence during his diversion or idleness, ought not to reckon that the only expense; he has really spent, or rather thrown away, five shillings besides.” Furthermore, Weber argues that this ascetic brand of Protestantism provided a rationalized justification for the division of labor, a phenomenon which enabled the industrial revolution that did not spread without resistance, for it was thought by some to be too limiting (emphasis not in the original): “The emphasis on the ascetic importance of a fixed calling provided an ethical justification of the modern specialized division of labour. In a similar way the providential interpretation of profit-making justified the activities of the business man.”

It would be useful to linger a moment to properly define the process of rationalization. According to the German sociologist Jürgen Habermas, Weber’s original conception of modernization creates three different spheres of social value through the rationalization process:

(a) the establishment of a scientific enterprise in which empirical-scientific problems can be dealt with according to internal truth standards, independently of theological doctrines and separately from basic moral-practical questions; (b) the institutionalization of an artistic enterprise in which the production of art is gradually set loose from cultic-ecclesiastical and courtly-patronal bonds, and the reception of works of art by an art-enjoying public of readers, spectators, and listeners is mediated through professionalized aesthetic criticism; and finally (c) the professional intellectual treatment of questions of ethics, political theory, and jurisprudence in schools of law, in the legal system, and in the legal public sphere.

28 Ibid, 14
29 Ibid, 109
This analysis of Weber’s theory of rationalization is of particular interest for this paper. First, Habermas’ conception of the rationalized scientific sphere of value, independent from “theological doctrines” would be handy, once we cover Taylor’s theory of secularization in the next chapter. For now, suffice it to say that this independent sphere creates an alternative worldview which socially legitimate, undermining religious authority by creating an alternative. The rationalized legal sphere has the same effect, by creating an alternative moral code to that of traditional religious authority. We shall return to this interpretation of rationalization in the next chapter.

This paper does not assume that Marx and Weber’s ideas are mutually exclusive. Each focused on different structural mechanisms in a society and explained the transformations that they were witnessing, with Marx focusing on the underlying material aspects of social progress, and Weber on the cultural aspects. Weber did not underestimate the importance of material changes, he just thought that they do not tell the whole story; that Marx forgot to stress the importance of the cultural transformation that Europe underwent in explaining the rise of capitalism. If Marx were alive to read Weber’s work, one could argue that he would have defended his position, yet it is arguable that their ideas are not mutually exclusive at all. Marx himself also noted the rationalization the economy, unfortunately all too briefly:

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his “natural superiors”, and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment”. It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation.31

And Weber expressed similar sentiments:

A specifically bourgeois economic ethic had grown up. With the consciousness of standing in the fullness of God’s grace and being visibly blessed by Him, the bourgeois businessman, as long as he remained within the bounds of formal correctness, as long as his moral conduct was spotless and the use to which he put his wealth was not objectionable, could follow his pecuniary interests as he would and feel that he was fulfilling a duty in doing so. The power of religious asceticism provided him in addition with sober, conscientious, and unusually industrious workmen, who clung to their work as to a life purpose willed by God.32

Those two quotes, show that the two thinkers’ ideas about the modernization of Europe are in fact intertwined. Marx definitely identified and recognized the importance of the cultural changes that came with modernity, yet he saw those as consequences, rather than root causes. This paper privileges Weber’s analysis, for he pries deeply into the bourgeois ethic - a new, rationalized social imaginary. This new, rationalized set of norms emerged just before the rise of capitalism, and it remained even after its religious justifications that gave rise to it vanished. In the next chapter, we shall take a closer look specifically at secularization from a more contemporary perspective, and see why and how Marx and Weber’s influential ideas are still so relevant for breaking down the relationship between modernization and secularization.

IV. Charles Taylor’s Secularization

Having looked at some of the structural mechanisms that drive social development in general, we should now take a close look at secularization as a phenomenon more specifically, paying close attention to recent global trends and the way scholars have analyzed them. Having witnessed the relatively fast economic development of developing nations in the mid-20th century, many sociologists postulated that the globe is undergoing mass secularization. Modernization and secularization seemed to coincide, so it was not illogical to assume that as societies develop, so they will secularize. Several years later, however, another set of scholars (and sometimes the same scholars, like Peter Berger) noticed that the global trend is in fact not towards secularization; that many societies around the world might in fact be de-secularizing, or even becoming more religious, as was the case for many Muslim countries and other Eastern European countries emerging from communism. This dissonance sparked an ongoing debate about the way secularization works, what drives it, and whether we should indeed expect to see a global trend towards secularization or whether we are witnessing an opposite effect. This debate is far from settled, for this disparity in what one would expect from modernizing societies and the actual religious attitude remains. This definitely applies to our case study: many scholars predicted for Muslim immigrants in Europe to secularize in the second, and especially the third generations, yet the data shows that if secularization exists, it is occurring much slower than previously predicted.
To ultimately try to explain this disparity between the secularization thesis and the actual trends, I should like to start with Charles Taylor’s influential work, *A Secular Age*. In it, Taylor starts by asking what secularization means in the first place, which is a necessary step that we must also take in order to then be able to talk about the different processes that influence secularization on large scales. Taylor distinguishes between two different kinds of “secularization” that scholars often use. In the first instance, academics use secularization to refer to the absence of faith in political organizations and public spaces. Secularization, in this sense, is defined by the level of organized religious influence on those bureaucratic and political spheres. In other words, this refers to the separation of Church and State; of organized religion from political power. Taylor argues that this definition of secularization is not good enough, for it does not account for the actual proliferation of religious belief in a society, only to the relationship between religious and political institutions and to religious influence in the public sphere. Taylor points towards the United States to illustrate the shortcomings of defining secularization this way, for the U.S is one of the first nations to separate Church from State, and continues to operate on the grounds of complete separation between organized religious institutions and politics, yet “it is also the Western society with the highest statistics for religious belief and practice”.

This goes to show that assessing secularization by the level of separation between religious and political institutions does not account for the actual levels of religiosity in a given society; that a society can be highly religious despite its political structures’ secular nature, and vice versa.

According to Taylor, another definition that scholars use can be seen as the opposite of the first definition, according to which absence of faith from people’s lives defines a given population’s level of religiosity or degree of secularization. “In this second meaning,” Taylor

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argues, “secularity consists in the falling off of religious belief and practice, in people turning away from God, and no longer going to Church. In this sense, the countries of western Europe have mainly become secular—even those who retain the vestigial public reference to God in public space.” Yet this definition is insufficient for similar reasons; it fails to take into account the level of religious involvement in political life. One can easily imagine a theocracy in which the population is religiously coerced, yet the people do not practice the faith at home, as is the case for many individuals living in theocracies like Saudi Arabia or Iran. Even if we had data that show the majority of these countries’ citizens are in fact secular in the privacy of their homes, it would be difficult, perhaps impossible to argue that those are secular societies, because of the politicized nature of Islam in those instances.

Taylor then suggests his own, third definition of secularization which this paper will draw on, that focuses on the conditions of belief. Taylor argues that a better way to think about a given society’s level of secularization is by asking: is religious faith one of many, equally legitimate options? “The shift to secularity in this sense,” he argues, “consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.” Taylor, then, argues that the secularization/desecularization dichotomy is not particularly useful, for the secular and the religious interact in complex ways in our time. Under this definition of secularization, the United States could indeed be seen as highly secular, despite the high percentages of religious individuals, but also countries that have not formally separated religion from state that nevertheless have low percentages of religious belief. He goes on and compares

34 Ibid
35 The intention is to use those cases to illustrate Taylor’s second definition of secularization – the politicization of Islam will not be extensively discussed in this paper.
religious societies, under his own definition, like many Muslim countries or certain Indian milieu, and secular Western societies, arguing that “there are big differences between these societies in what it is to believe, stemmin\[asi the fact that belief is an option, and in some sense an embattled option in the Christian (or “post-Christian”) society, and not (or not yet) in the Muslim ones”37 (emphasis in original). In other words, Taylor defines secularization as the move from societies where it was “virtually impossible not to believe in God”, towards societies where belief in God is one among many equally legitimate, private options; towards a society where religious belief is no longer axiomatic.

One can claim that this is the best definition for secularization for the purposes of this investigation. By and large, both Europe and the United States are highly secularized, based on Taylor’s definition; it would be hard to argue that in any Western European country, or the United States, there is any pressure on the individual to become or remain religious. Belief, in both instances, is a private decision, just like a political preference. Surely, religious individuals may face some prejudice where their peers have abandoned faith or have been raised without it, but not much more than, say, a left-winged individual in the company of right-winged peers. One’s faith or absence thereof is a legitimate, legal, socially acceptable behaviour.

But one may ask: how can this definition be properly applied to the case of Muslim immigrants specifically? When looking at Muslims’ secularization in the Western context, there are two ways that Taylor’s definition of secularized/secularizing societies may apply: First, his definition can refer to the Western nations’ legal, political and social norms, especially whether the general public sees religion as a legitimate choice and its free expression as a protected political and civil right, as well as absence thereof. In the second instance, one can ask the same questions.

37 Ibid
but only focusing on the Muslim community in those nations and whether the community specifically also harbors such attitudes towards religious belief. This paper shall attempt to answer those questions later on, after we finish with the theoretical and historical exploration of secularization and modernization. But for now, suffice it to say that the flexibility of Taylor’s definition, particularly in its scope, make it quite useful for our purposes. Furthermore, this paper asserts that framing the issue of secularization in terms of the legitimization of private choices is simply elegant, for the reasons described above: nobody would intuitively say that the U.S is inherently religious, despite the abundance of religious individuals, and the same goes for Europe, for nobody would intuitively say that Norway for example is inherently religious either, despite the formal connection between Church and State.

Although it is hard to summarize Taylor’s large, intricate set of arguments presented in “A Secular Age”, especially with regards to the likely future developments in religiosity-secularism, it can be said that Taylor ultimately believes that Western society is on the path towards increasing respect for personal sovereignty; that there is a widespread moral code of expressive individualism which progressively strives to protect and respect the “integrity of different ways of life”\(^{38}\) and self-actualization. Taylor rejects the common narrative that science and reason leave no room for faith; he thinks the story is much more complicated than that. Darwin did not refute the Bible. Instead, Taylor believes that Europe’s historic secularization was primarily due to a shift towards rationalized values and norms that allowed for greater individual freedom and social mobility. Much like Weber (and Taylor builds many of his own arguments on Weberian foundations), Taylor believes that Europe’s modernization and subsequent secularization were cultural, first; a reshuffling of moral priorities sparked by the Protestant Reformation. Furthermore, Taylor argues

\(^{38}\) Ibid, 772
that we should not expect people’s interest in religious faith to wane in this new cultural paradigm - some people will always be drawn towards it. Yet in this new individualistic paradigm, Taylor argues that we should expect faith to evolve in order to survive; to expand the scope of religious belief and the plurality within religions. He argues that,

if we don’t accept the view that the human aspiration to religion will flag, and I do not, then where will the access lie to practice of and deeper engagement with religion? The answer is the various forms of spiritual practice to which each is drawn in his/her own spiritual life. These may involve meditation, or some charitable work, or a study group, or a pilgrimage, or some special form of prayer, or a host of such things.39

Habermas also commented about this Weberian kind of secularization, perfectly summarizing the relationship between rationalization, modernization, secularization, and capitalism:

What Weber depicted was not only the secularization of Western culture, but also and especially the development of modern societies from the viewpoint of rationalization. The new structures of society were marked by the differentiation of the two functionally intermeshing systems that had taken shape around the organizational cores of the capitalist enterprise and the bureaucratic state apparatus. Weber understood this process as the institutionalization of purposive-rational economic and administrative action. To the degree that everyday life was affected by this cultural and societal rationalization, traditional forms of life - which in the early modern period were differentiated primarily according to one's trade - were dissolved.40

39 Ibid, 515
If we extrapolate from Habermas’ interpretation of Weber’s theory of rationalization mentioned earlier, it is precisely this *institutionalization* of rationalism that legitimizes other worldviews, thereby devaluing the authority of religious institutions, leaders, and scripture. Through the process of rationalization, institutionalized scientific and legal spheres are created in (but not necessarily limited to) liberal democracies that are completely independent from religious influence.

Let us conclude this chapter with Mark Chaves, who argues for a similar kind of secularization, defined as a “decline in the scope of religious authority.”41 This simple formulation is, in a way, a reaction to the supporters of the desecularization thesis - and a defense of the integrity of the secularization thesis. One can argue that Chavez’s formulation is in tune with Taylor’s: if secularized society is defined by the availability of nonreligious alternatives, then this necessarily means that the authority of religious institutions, hierarchies and scripture is decreased. Chavez states, “The religious beliefs, sentiments, etc. in the minds of individuals are socially efficacious only when they become mobilized and institutionalized as structures of authority. Secularization as the declining power of these religious authority structures represents secularization as a truly sociological phenomenon.”42 This formulation, this paper asserts, is completely in tune with Taylor’s, yet it distills those aspects of Taylor’s large study into the particular aspect of secularization that is most relevant for the case of Islam in the West. Later in the thesis, we shall discuss the possibility of Islamic reform in the Western context, and in the next chapter we will discuss the Jewish reformation in the U.S, and this definition of declining religious authority will be very useful in explaining the *secularizing* shift within Islam.

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42 Ibid, 770
V. Judaism in the West

At this point in the paper, it would be useful to direct our attention to a notable historical example of secularization: the emergence of Reform Judaism. This discussion shall focus on the religious aspects of Reform Judaism, ignoring the political transformations that Jews as a people underwent at around the same time period (namely, the increased political consciousness of the Jewish people and the advent of Zionism). This historical analysis will serve us well, for two main reasons. First, there are many historical lessons to be learned from the transition to Reform Judaism about the process of secularization in general: for example, how and why do groups secularize and what motivates them in this process. This step will serve as a further distillation of the argument presented above, where secularization - the loss of religious authority in liberal democracies, in favor of social acceptance of different ways of living - is an inevitable outcome of living in an increasingly inescapable capitalistic, rationalized, social reality. This reality is common to any and all liberal democracies, like the United States and all Western European countries. Second, the emergence of Reform Judaism - which, it will be argued, is a clear example of secularization within a religious context - has very close parallels to the history and possibly the future of Islam in the West. This further strengthens the argument of this paper, that mainstream orthodox Sunni Islam will struggle to survive in this context. To do this, let us first ask what Reform Judaism is, and how it developed.
Although Reform Judaism’s roots lie in Europe, one of its most defining documents - the Pittsburgh Platform - was written in the U.S, where a very large community of Reform Jews live today. In fact, they account for the relative majority of American Jews - 35% of all Jewish Americans, and 39% of Jewish Americans that are members of a synagogue, as compared to 18% and 29% Conservative, and 10% and 22% Orthodox, respectively. The eight central points of the document - written in a meeting of Reform rabbis in 1885 in Pittsburgh - can be found in this paper’s appendix. Notice that some of the points reaffirm the authors’ connection and commitment to Judaism and its values, above other religions. Other points, though, emphasize Judaism as a “progressive religion, ever striving to be in accord with the postulates of reason.” Most notably, however, the authors stress that, while they reaffirm that Judaism’s moral laws are binding, those purely ritualistic laws shall be rejected: “we accept as binding only [Judaism’s] moral laws, and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.” In this pivotal moment, then, the founding fathers of the American Jewish Reform movement abandoned long lasting traditions like kashrut - keeping in accordance with Jewish dietary rules - which is a central tenet of Conservative and Orthodox Judaism.

Another question to ask is how is Reform Judaism different from Orthodox Judaism. This, it turns out, is a not such a simple question to answer, especially since Reform Judaism itself split into two main streams: a newer branch of Reform Judaism emerged in the ‘70s - “New” Reform Judaism - which further reformed the faith by, for example, officially including patrilineal Jews into the “tent” (the community of believers), making it much more inclusive (which goes against

the completely exclusive, matrilineal nature of traditional - i.e Orthodox and Conservative - Judaism). This goes only to strengthen the notion that Reform Judaism is, first and foremost, a version of Judaism with far less authority over the believer’s life; a departure from a strict textual and Rabbinical authority towards individualized religious belief as a chosen (rather than a given, or a dictated) way of life. In the introduction to his book The New Reform Judaism: Challenges and Reflections, Rabbi Kaplan, a well-known Reform Rabbi, defines Reform Judaism broadly: "In Reform Judaism, one's religious beliefs are flexible. The decisive factor is what is spiritually meaningful for each individual. The Reform movement seeks to be a theological ‘big tent’ into which almost everyone can fit."

Reformjudaism.org is a website “developed by a wide variety of educators, rabbis, cantors and laypersons who are active participants in Reform Jewish life.”

According to the site, “the following principles distinguish Reform Jews from other streams of Judaism in North America:

- Reform Jews are committed to the principle of inclusion, not exclusion. Since 1978 the Reform Movement has been reaching out to Jews-by-choice and interfaith families, encouraging them to embrace Judaism. Reform Jews consider children to be Jewish if they are the child of a Jewish father or mother, so long as the child is raised as a Jew.

- Reform Jews are committed to the absolute equality of women in all areas of Jewish life. We were the first movement to ordain women rabbis, invest women cantors, and elect women presidents of our synagogues.

- Reform Jews are also committed to the full participation of gays and lesbians in synagogue life as well as society at large.”

Yet this description is meant to appeal to a contemporary audience, touching upon contemporary issues, but in fact, the differences do not end with the full inclusion of women and the LGBTQ community. It might be best to define Reform Judaism by what Orthodox Judaism is not; for the Reform umbrella allows for a wide range of different religious practices and norms, and for individualistic interpretations of Judaism, which Orthodoxy opposes by definition. While Orthodox Judaism is inherently static, striving to save the traditional and literal elements of Judaism from the changing times, Reform Judaism does the opposite: it tries to adjust the faith to fit the times, saving the appropriate moral and religious elements, while discarding the outdated ones. Furthermore, Reform Judaism explicitly stresses the importance of personal and local autonomy (the autonomy of individuals over their own religious practices and the autonomy of individual Rabbis, leaders, and synagogues) over the way the faith is practiced, rejecting any and all traditional Jewish authority that does not fit with one’s own religious preferences. Rabbi Kaplan, mentioned above, summarized this neatly in another one of his works, *American Reform Judaism: An Introduction*:

Because of its stress on autonomy - both of the individual and of the congregation - Reform Judaism has manifested itself differently in various countries. Nevertheless, Reform communities throughout the world share certain characteristics ... Reform Jews believe that religious change is legitimate and that Judaism has changed over the centuries as society has changed ... The guiding principal of the contemporary Reform movement is that it can
adapt Jewish religious beliefs and practices to the needs of the Jewish people from generation to generation.\textsuperscript{47}

Now, let us look at Reform Judaism’s history, to focus on the processes that gave rise to this secularizing, progressive movement. Why and when did Reform Judaism emerge? What motivated Jewish leaders to reform their faith in such a way? According to the common narrative, the need for reform stemmed from fears that Christian missionaries might convert the newly-arrived Jewish population, and from fears of intermarriage.\textsuperscript{48} But Kaplan argues that this is only partially true; that this narrative might fit the story of Reform Judaism in Europe better than it does for American Reform Judaism. Now, although the Reform movement in Judaism have clear intellectual roots in Europe, spearheaded by Rabbi Geiger, and although in Europe the motivations for reform might have been related to fears of conversion to Christianity, the movement only gained the proper popular attention that it needed to spread in America.\textsuperscript{49} According to Kaplan, the Jewish Reform movement in America was, first and foremost, an active attempt to rationalize and modernize the faith, just like their Protestant neighbors: “American Jews, most of whom were of central European background, saw the tremendous influence that liberal religion had on their Protestant neighbors and wanted to develop a Judaism equivalent to Episcopalianism, Presbyterianism, and especially Unitarianism ... [The Pittsburgh Platform] defined Reform Judaism as a rational and modern form of religion in contrast with traditional Judaism on one hand and universalist ethics on the other.”\textsuperscript{50} It is not a coincidence that the Pittsburgh Platform rejected purely ritualistic laws, like keeping kosher. The Jewish community, which is inherently non-

\textsuperscript{47} Kaplan, Dana Evan. \textit{American Reform Judaism: An Introduction}. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003, 8
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, 9
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, 8-10
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, 14
proselytizing, faced the rationalizing and individualistic spirit of a free-market society, and the rejection of all purely ritualistic laws was not only an attempt to rationalize the faith (what is the reason for those dietary rules?), but also an attempt to preserve it by appealing to a younger generation growing up in an ever-increasingly individualistic capitalist society. The American Jewish population could have (and parts of it did) remain in closed communities in order to protect Orthodoxy, yet, if Kaplan is right, the community had a genuine desire to lose those purely ritualistic elements in favor of rationalization and modernization. This paper argues that this desire is, in turn, a survival mechanism for communities that find themselves operating in such rationalized spheres. Rationalized, liberal-democratic nations exert a secularizing force on their citizens, for this cultural framework pulls the rug under the feet of any non-rational, non-institutionalized authority (to borrow from Habermas’s interpretation of Weber’s modernization), including religious authority, by legitimizing other options.

One may ask, then, what remains of Judaism as a religion, having been emptied of its non-ethical components? Is faith not defined by the combination of ethical and ritual imperatives? Although it goes far beyond the scope of this paper to properly dissect the social, ethnic, and religious aspects of Judaism, this questions should be briefly mentioned, for it is relevant for our case. Reform Judaism is quite interesting, because of Judaism’s historic exclusivity. Indeed, it is not hard to grasp the difficulty of ridding the faith of its purely ritualistic elements, while at the same time, say, conditioning membership by matrilineal relationships. There certainly is a contradiction here - a dissonance - which the Reform Jewish community is clearly struggling with to this day. The literature about who “counts” as a Jew, about the effects of reform on the unity of Jewish community, and about the next steps that Reform Jewish movement should take, is immense. There are many somewhat reactionary voices inside the Reform Jewish community -
Kaplan included - that are worried about the future of the Reform movement under the “big tent” approach, which strives to be as inclusive as possible towards progressive interpretations of Judaism, for it blurs the lines between faith and culture. Many Rabbis argue, including Kaplan, that theological coherence is needed for the Reform movement to survive as a religious movement. Furthermore, many Reform Rabbis express their concern about intermarriage - which is on the rise among Jews in general, but also among all Americans\(^51\) - for there is clear data that the children of intermarried Jews are much less likely to consistently attend services, for example,\(^52\) and may eventually lose touch with the faith. The data clearly supports this - according to a Pew Research Center report titled “A Portrait of Jewish Americans”, far greater percentages of Jews that were raised in Reform households abandon the faith completely. Additionally, this report shows that far greater percentages of Jews raised in Conservative or Orthodox households move “down the chain” (from Orthodox to Conservative, from Conservative to Reform, from Reform to non-Jewish etc.), than Jews moving “up the chain” in general (but, it should also be noted, that the Pew report also suggests that the Orthodox community should grow, due to its high fertility rate.)\(^53\)

This goes to show that, ultimately, Reform Judaism - in its present form, but also projected towards the future, based on the Rabbi Kaplan’s concerns and the Pew report - may be seen as cultural, rather than religious Judaism. In other words - Reform Judaism might be better characterized as a cultural identity with religious elements, rather than a strictly religious identity. Yet delving into definitions and debates about what constitutes a cultural rather than a religious identity is far beyond our scope, so, suffice it to say that Reform Judaism, as a departure from strict, Orthodox Judaism, represents a shift from strict adherence to religious authority towards


\(^{52}\) Ibid, 67-68

\(^{53}\) Ibid, 11
religious pluralism; that Reform Judaism replaced religious authority as the binding force between Jewish individuals - strict adherence to rituals, figures, and scripture - with strong cultural elements. Are Muslims in the West undergoing similar processes? Are there regional differences? Those are the questions we shall focus on in the next chapter.
VI. Islamic Secularization: Sachedina’s *Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism*

Let us bear in mind what we have covered so far – that rationalization was a defining feature of the West’s modernization which gave rise to capitalism; that a central characteristic of modern, capitalist liberal democracies is their tendency to rationalize all aspects of life; that rationalization correlated with secularization in 19th century Europe; that secularization can be defined by the availability of socially acceptable, non-religious, alternative ways of living; that secularization, defined as such, necessarily leads to a decline in the authority of religious institutions, leaders, and scripture but does not necessarily result in a total abandonment of faith; and finally, that Judaism’s arrival to America and the subsequent transformation it underwent represented an active grassroots attempt to rationalize the faith in order to adapt it to modern, capitalistic, individualistic society. What can we now say about the prospect of a widespread, Muslim secularization? And what can we say about religious orthodoxy’s future generally, in a rationalized Western context? To answer those questions we must first see whether Islam can be compatible with the Western values we have identified so far, and whether the West is compatible with Islam; we need to see whether there is an *inherent*, philosophical contradiction between the different sets of values that the two carry with them. Therefore, in this chapter we shall begin by looking at Islam and its capacity to accommodate for modern Western values, and then at the West, to further distill the structural mechanisms that promote secularization more
specifically than the aforementioned Weberian theoretical framework. Once those questions are answered and the relationship properly defined, we may answer this paper’s central questions presented above.

It should be reasserted here that Muslims are spread across a vast geographical area, come from a wide array of different national and cultural backgrounds, and are quite diverse in their religious preferences and practices. Furthermore, it should be noted that the emergence of political Islam, and the proliferation of intra-Islamic conflicts such as the Syrian Civil War and the struggle for regional influence between Saudi Arabia and Iran (which has most recently manifested itself in the Yemeni Civil War) all complicate our discussion of the future of Islam as a global religion. Islam in the West is, without a doubt, impacted by those events, if only due to the sheer size and diversity of this religion, and the fact that Muslims are still relatively new arrivals in the West, with lasting connections to their home countries. Islam is large, diverse, and, we must remember, interconnected at the same time. Nevertheless, it will be argued here that the West - particularly Europe and the U.S - stands out as a unique socio-political frameworks within which Islam can evolve with some degree of independence from external influences; that Islam is likely to undergo some kind of secularization, or even a reformation, possibly but not necessarily similar to the reformation of Judaism in the U.S. Ultimately, it will be argued that religious orthodoxy is unlikely to survive in a Western context of modernized capitalist society in general, unless such orthodox communities manage to isolate themselves from the liberal democratic State. This is a challenging feat.

To see whether Islam is likely to undergo some kind of secularization, let us first ask: can Islam accommodate a secularization process, in the first place? In other words: is there something inherent in Islam that acts as a strong enough inhibitor to counter the secularizing effects of
rationalized capitalism? Is Islam intrinsically opposed to democratic pluralism, destined to preserve itself by means of isolation, like Orthodox Judaism in America today? Is Islam inherently non-materialistic? Does its cultural and philosophical foundations stand in direct opposition to modernization, rationalization and/or the free market economy? To clarify, those questions are raised not with regards to the “dos and don’ts” of Islam - they are not about Islam’s religious imperatives - rather, they refer to the philosophical and historical framework that Islam built for itself over the centuries and its compatibility with a modernized, Western, pluralistic social framework.

To answer these questions, let us turn our attention to Abdulaziz Sachedina’s *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism*. In this book, Sachedina endeavors to ‘rescue’ from history the democratic and pluralistic aspects of Islamic doctrine, which, he argues, have unfortunately been largely forgotten by the various religious leaderships of mainstream, orthodox Islam - Sunni or otherwise. Sachedina set himself with the task of making those somewhat forgotten elements “relevant to the present,” in an attempt to show that Islam is not incompatible with the spirit of the time; that Islam can secularize from within - again, as defined previously, in the sense that Islamic religious authority can decrease, and that Islam can accommodate for “democratic pluralism”, which is the term he employs to describe the same values we have been referring to in our discussion on liberal democracy: those social properties that emerged from the “spirit of capitalism”; the pluralistic, individualistic, secular set of values that are justified and reinforced by the rationalized nature of capitalist societies. The main bulk of Sachedina’s work in this book is concentrated on “rescuing” those pluralistic and democratic elements of Islamic thought and

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55 Ibid
Sachedina defends this proposition by providing us with historical examples of democratic, pluralistic Islam in practice - most notably, the Muʿtazila school, which “asserted the efficacy of natural reason as a source of spiritual and ethical knowledge.”

In general, he shows that the Muslim faith has not been static whatsoever throughout its history; that it manifested itself differently at different times and places. In addition to providing the reader with ample historical examples of democratic, pluralistic instances of Islam, he also searches for "the intrinsic value of the concepts in the Koran and the Tradition, situating them in the context of the whole of the Islamic way of life", in order to get “a glimpse of the social philosophy of Islamic tradition,” to ultimately show that Islam does not necessarily stand in opposition to democratic, pluralistic values. Although the points he raises in defense of Islam’s possible compatibility with democracy are quite useful to us, there is no need to delve deep into the examples that he lists, due to the limited scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that those historical examples exist, and that they are ample.

Overall, Sachedina asks a set of questions that are quite similar to our own, so it would be useful to linger a little and direct our attention to the very beginning of his work, where he lists his primary set of assumptions and endows the reader with the necessary theoretical background for democratic pluralism in Islam. Of particular interest to this paper are his assumptions about global secularization today (related directly to the secularization/desecularization debate), and about the defining features of “pluralistic democracies”. At the very beginning of his book, Sachedina provides the reader with an overview of the secularization/desecularization debate, asking whether

56 Ibid, 21
57 Ibid, 13-14
the apparent absence of widespread global secularization could be compared to other instances of religious change in human history. He quickly concludes that the current global “religious revival” is actually a unique phenomenon, since religion itself - in general - is changing from the bottom up. Sachedina argues that the world as a whole might in fact be secularizing, depending on how one defines “secularization”. His own definition of secularization seems to go along surprisingly similar lines as Taylor’s, and, based on this kind of definition - secularization as the increasing social acceptance of different ways of life; secularization as indicated by pluralism and the subsequent decline in religious authority - one may argue that the global trend is in fact moving towards secularization, despite the apparent trend of desecularization.

The perceived heightened levels of global religiosity, then, can be explained by two different processes: on the one hand, the emergence of secularized religions - again, using Taylor’s definition of secularization to refer to the pluralistic acceptance of other ways of life, but this time, within a religion - make it seem as though religious belief is on the rise, whereas one may argue that religiosity is actually declining, globally, if the nature of religious belief itself is changing:

... the emerging religiosity of modern society does not see church and religion as identical. This new religiosity is visible in those aspects of Muslim patriotism in which religious symbols inspire intense commitment ... There is a growing majority in every religious community that is in search of a tolerant creed to further interhuman understanding beyond an exclusionary and consequently intolerant institutional religiosity.\(^{58}\)

Furthermore:

There is ample evidence to suggest substantial worldwide growth of a religious consciousness that points beyond particular religious traditions to embrace a pluralistic and

\(^{58}\) Ibid, 7
tolerant attitude towards other faiths ... But this religiosity, as pointed out earlier, must transcend the monologic exclusivity of institutionalized religion. It is not uncommon to come across a Muslim who professes a strong commitment to Islam's social-ethical dimension, but who never attends public prayers or observes prescribed rituals. Such common, though not generic, religiosity has been on the rise in many countries around the world since the late 1960's.  

Religion in general, then, might simply be undergoing a secularizing popular transformation from below (without abandoning faith altogether), driven by a genuine grassroots desire to adopt new, liberal democratic values, which may explain the perceived persistence of religion in our time: people might still identify as religious and display their religiosity publically by attending services or displaying religious symbols, for example, but the nature of faith itself might be secularizing by means of privatization (making the faith personal and, at the same time, delegitimizing religious authority).

On the other hand, Sachedina also argues that the leaders of traditional organized religious institutions, and the plethora of relatively new, “particular” (exclusive, non-pluralistic) interpretations of religion (much like Wahhabi Islam, which, despite its strictness, is relatively young) constitute the “vocal minority”, making it seem as though religious orthodoxy is on the rise, when in fact the popular trend is towards the privatization of faith - and here “privatization” is meant not primarily in the economic sense, but in the individualistic, personal sense, leading, ultimately, to the kind of “religious secularization” that we are after in this current endeavor. In other words, a combination of the proliferation of secularized yet religious individuals, and the relative “loudness” of conservative, nonsecular religious leaders, make it seem as though the global

59 Ibid, 8
trend is towards desecularization, when it might actually be that religious belief itself is secularizing and proliferating at the same time.

Note that this narrative correlates quite neatly with the history of Reform Judaism in the United States. A parallel may certainly be drawn between Judaism in the U.S at the eve of reformation and Islam in the West today: indeed, it follows from Sachedina’s writing that, since Islam can accommodate - and has accommodated in the past - for “democratic pluralism”, there is no reason why we should not expect such a shift to occur today. So far in this thesis, the possibility of an Islamic Reformation has not been seriously and explicitly raised, and purposefully so, for arguing for the likelihood of Islamic reformation, with certainly, is too bold for a paper of this sort. Nevertheless, we should here acknowledge that based on what has been covered so far, there seems to be nothing preventing the emergence of an Islamic reform movement. In fact, the aforementioned social and cultural pressures exerted on Islam render the privatization (again, not strictly in the economic sense) of the faith likely, which, in turn, may lead to a reformation, but this cannot be said with certainty. Other scholars agree that some sort of reformation may indeed occur, particularly through emerging Muslim political interest groups in the U.S. For example, in his essay titled “Political Muslims in America: From Islamism to Exceptionalism”, M. A. Muqtedar Khan overviews the most prominent American Muslim organizations today and traces their histories, to see in which direction they are heading. He argues that although the oldest of those organizations “were influenced by the ideas of political Islam ... the rise of Islamophobia in the United States and the consistently hostile discourse in the public sphere have started eroding the influence of political Islam on the culture and politics of American Muslims.”60 This, he argues, led to a grassroots readiness to change Islam in the U.S: “America's immigration filters

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60 Khan, M. A. Muqtedar. "Political Muslims in America: From Islamism to Exceptionalism." Middle East Policy 22, no. 1 (2015), 32
had shaped the community such that there was a built-in predilection towards reform, openness and intellectual development.”\(^{61}\)

Furthermore, this growth and proliferation of private, progressive Islamic organizations, especially in the U.S, may indeed indicate that a top-down religious transformation is occurring as well, and, again, those organizations may conceivably become nuclei for widespread reformation in the future. Famously, Tariq Ramadan, a well-known theologian and a strong proponent of Islamic reformation, wrote several books on this theme, arguing that the Islamic reformation has begun, in the West, while simultaneously advocating for it.\(^{62}\) Yet his writings lean more towards advocacy and towards identifying the religious and intra-Muslim obstacles towards reformation. To illustrate this point: “Beginning with the message of Islam and its universal principles, I have investigated the tools that can give an impetus, from the inside, to a movement of reform and integration into the new environments.”\(^{63}\) Contrast that with a critical, holistic analysis of both the external and internal pressures exerted on the Muslim community, which is why we shall not reference him extensively, but, suffice it to say that there are Muslim theologians, scholars, and religious leaders in the West that are actively advocating for a reformation; that there are “insiders” promoting this idea. Conversely, the grassroots transformative pressure exerted on the Muslim faith by believers has already been established through Sachedina. Coupled with the emergence of intellectuals like Tariq Ramadan who may attempt to spearhead an Islamic reformation, it is not unlikely for a reformation to occur, but predicting it outright is a much bolder step that we should avoid.

\(^{61}\) Ibid, 37
Coming back to Sachedina - we should not be inclined to take the entirety of his work as a holistic framework for this thesis; his arguments are every useful, but they should not be treated as a lens, as we have with Taylor’s secularization and Weber’s rationalization of society. First, the theoretical foundations for the argument presented here and Sachedina’s are different, for the argument presented here is explicitly rooted in a Weberian understanding of modernization, while Sachedina’s is not (or, at least not openly so: he talks about rationalization or, more commonly, about “reason”). His conception of secularization coincides with Taylor’s very neatly, but he never references him explicitly. Second, some of the more specific arguments that Sachedina puts forth (as opposed to his general observations) are quite unconvincing: for example, he argues several times that government can benefit from cooperating with religious figures and institutions, but the author of this thesis personally does not see why this is necessarily the case. Furthermore, Sachedina’s scope is global, while ours is limited to the West. Nevertheless, the arguments covered so far in this chapter fit well with the framework we have established, greatly reinforcing it by demonstrating that Islam can indeed readily accommodate a secularizing change, even in the context of the Muslim world, and by broadening our understanding of secularization beyond the purely theoretical examination of Taylor’s work.

VII. Conclusion

Let us begin this paper’s concluding remarks by reiterating, once more, that generalizations are hard to make about such a diverse group as Muslim in the West. Nevertheless, we can make some limited generalizations based on the data presented here regarding Muslims living in Western countries. This thesis demonstrated that the different Muslim communities in the West, generally:

1. Are willing to integrate into liberal democratic society.
2. Are facing different degrees of discrimination.
3. Can be, especially in the U.S, already integrated to a certain extent, displaying similar behaviors and attitudes as the general population.
4. Can be, especially in the U.S, financially stable and in many cases successful.

Klausen’s interviews of European Muslim leaders showed, additionally, that by and large the Muslim leadership in Europe is ready to fully participate in this liberal democratic context, if only the barriers – in the form of state bureaucracy and popular discrimination – would be removed. The U.S Muslim community, as we have seen, is better integrated into the American social fabric, and already have strong interest groups. Additionally, it seems that the heightened state interference in the public sphere in Europe contributes to the relatively slower rate of secularization.
This paper argued that some defining features of liberal democracies are their varying levels of individualism, and their open promotion of different worldviews. It has been argued that these values stem from a process inherent to liberal democracies: the rationalization of society. While Marx argued that social progress – including secularization – is a direct reflection of the existing modes of production, Weber argued that this materialistic analysis is not enough to explain all social progress, for the development of capitalism seems to beg for a fuller explanation. The West – which in this paper was defined in liberal democratic terms - seems to be conducive to pluralistic ways of living, by legitimizing any and all legal and scientific ways of life, which are the two spheres of value that Habermas identified as direct outcomes of the rationalization process. One of this process’s outcomes, in turn, is a decline in the authority of religious institutions, leaders, and scripture, due to the believer’s ability to choose other, legitimate, nonreligious ways to live their lives. Those are also the terms that Charles Taylor chose to define secularization. For Taylor, the defining characteristic of secularization in our times is neither the separation of church and state, nor the practical decline in people’s faith. For Taylor, there is another, modern kind of secularization which better fits the religious trends of today, defined as an increasing availability of legitimate, nonreligious alternatives; as a shift towards a state wherein belief in God is not axiomatic.

In this thesis, the case of Reform Judaism in the U.S was presented as an example of this process. It has been clearly shown that Jewish immigrants in the United States had a grassroots desire to change their faith without abandoning it, particularly by leaving behind the purely ritualistic aspects of Judaism, only preserving its universal moral code. This thesis argues that Judaism’s reformation is a clear example of Taylor’s secularization, as well as Weber’s ideas about modernization and rationalization. American Jews in the 19th century were clearly demonstrated
to have *wanted* a religious change, in order to be able to adopt the then-emerging liberal democratic values of the United States. Furthermore, the fact that so many members of the American Jewish community chose the path of reform, as opposed to a total abandonment of Judaism, clearly demonstrates that in addition to this community’s desire to adapt, many also wanted to preserve Judaism as a religion in their lives, and perhaps even as a cultural and personal identity.

This thesis also showed that Islam is not inherently incompatible with the aforementioned liberal democratic values. In fact, we have shown that there are ample historical examples of Islamic democratic pluralism in the past. Additionally, it has been argued that the nature of religious faith might nowadays be changing globally, although this topic was not extensively covered. Sachedina, however, makes this argument, and this paper is inclined to agree that in the world of liberal democracy, it is not surprising for religions to become less authoritative. Islam, it seems, might indeed be following the same path. The fact that Sachedina made his argument about global Islam only serves to strengthen the argument presented here, for one would only expect this process to be accelerated in a Western, liberal democratic context.

Therefore, this paper argues that Islam is likely to secularize in the West, defined by a decline in Islamic religious authority. In other words, Muslims will likely feel much freer to either leave the faith or adopt nonorthodox religious practices. Although some progressive organizations might be promoting this idea, this phenomenon has not been identified yet on a large scale. Therefore, this paper does not argue that this religious change is inevitable, only that liberal democratic societies exert a pressure on religious orthodoxy, by allowing religious orthodox individuals to seek alternatives without any official consequences. Certainly, religious orthodox individuals might face other factors like social pressures from their close community, for example, that might discourage them from secularizing. Therefore this thesis only argues that, on large
scales, there is a meaningful pressure that liberal democratic contexts exert on orthodoxy, and that if liberal democracy remains in the West, we should expect religious orthodoxy to struggle to survive.
1885 Pittsburgh Conference
Declaration of Principles

1. We recognize in every religion an attempt to grasp the Infinite, and in every mode, source or book of revelation held sacred in any religious system the consciousness of the indwelling of God in man. We hold that Judaism presents the highest conception of the God-idea as taught in our Holy Scriptures and developed and spiritualized by the Jewish teachers, in accordance with the moral and philosophical progress of their respective ages. We maintain that Judaism preserved and defended midst continual struggles and trials and under enforced isolation, this God-idea as the central religious truth for the human race.

2. We recognize in the Bible the record of the consecration of the Jewish people to its mission as the priest of the one God, and value it as the most potent instrument of religious and moral instruction. We hold that the modern discoveries of scientific researches in the domain of nature and history are not antagonistic to the doctrines of Judaism, the Bible reflecting the primitive ideas of its own age, and at times clothing its conception of divine Providence and Justice dealing with men in miraculous narratives.

3. We recognize in the Mosaic legislation a system of training the Jewish people for its mission during its national life in Palestine, and today we accept as binding only its moral laws, and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.

4. We hold that all such Mosaic and rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity, and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas entirely foreign to our present mental and spiritual state. They fail to impress the modern Jew with a spirit of priestly holiness; their observance in our days is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation.

5. We recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel’s great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.
6. We recognize in Judaism a progressive religion, ever striving to be in accord with the postulates of reason. We are convinced of the utmost necessity of preserving the historical identity with our great past. Christianity and Islam, being daughter religions of Judaism, we appreciate their providential mission, to aid in the spreading of monotheistic and moral truth. We acknowledge that the spirit of broad humanity of our age is our ally in the fulfillment of our mission, and therefore we extend the hand of fellowship to all who cooperate with us in the establishment of the reign of truth and righteousness among men.

7. We reassert the doctrine of Judaism that the soul is immortal, grounding the belief on the divine nature of human spirit, which forever finds bliss in righteousness and misery in wickedness. We reject as ideas not rooted in Judaism, the beliefs both in bodily resurrection and in Gehenna and Eden (Hell and Paradise) as abodes for everlasting punishment and reward.

8. In full accordance with the spirit of the Mosaic legislation, which strives to regulate the relations between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve, on the basis of justice and righteousness, the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society.65

IX. References


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