RELIGION AND CULTURAL SYNTHESIS

by

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In considering the role of religion in fostering cultural synthesis, it is important to distinguish between dichotomizing systems of gaps and synthesizing systems of continuity. In general, monotheistic religions which (a) affirm the radical transcendence of the Creator over creation and (b) claim that their beliefs and values are exclusively true because they are legitimated by a unique, sovereign, divine Authority tend to fall under the first category. In the latter category we find pantheistic, mystical and incarnational traditions which affirm the ultimate, though not necessarily the immediate, unity of God, man and the cosmos. It is our thesis that systems of continuity are far more likely to foster cultural integration than systems of gaps.

An important social consequence of biblical monotheism has been the fostering of a sense of the radical incommensurability of God and man, God and nature, as well as between the "true" God and what the Bible takes to be the false gods of paganism. This has led to the alienation of man from man, at least those men whose sacred traditions were deemed to be false by the biblical religions, and, as we shall see, the eventual rise of modern secular individualism. In the domain of culture, the same

sensibility has led to the rise of the professional specialist who distinguishes between that which he knows well and all other knowledge. The specialist's spirit was perhaps best exemplified by the German sociologist Max Weber:

> Only by strict specialization can the scientific worker become fully conscious, for once and perhaps never again in his lifetime, that he has achieved something that will endure. A really definitive and good accomplishment is today always a specialized accomplishment. [1]

Weber saw the professional specialist as an indispensable and intrinsic feature of the culture of modern bureaucratic rationalism:

> ...bureaucracy rests upon expert training, a functional specialization of work, and an attitude set for habitual and virtuoso-like mastery of single yet methodically integrated functions. [2]

No modern scholar has done more than Weber to demonstrate the biblical origins of modern economic and social rationality with its specialist division of intellectual as well as industrial and bureaucratic labor. Weber saw the origins of modern practical rationality in the biblical belief in the transcendent sovereignty of God. According to Weber, this belief fostered the desacralization of both the political and the natural orders. [3] Although the tendency to the desacralization of the natural and political order was already present in ancient times in biblical Judaism, it was Protestantism, with its infinitely greater impact on the European cultural mainstream, which was primarily responsible for achieving the secularization of

European political and cultural institutions. In the case of biblical Judaism, biblical man came to understand nature as created by and wholly dependent upon an extra-mundane Creator and hence a realm devoid of any inherent spiritual power. Similarly, rejecting the claims of the divine kings of Egypt and Mesopotamia, biblical man considered the political order to be a purely human enterprise, albeit one that stood under the judgment of God. By contrast, the cultures of Egypt and Mesopotamia posited the continuity of "the world of men and the world of gods" in which human events and institutions were linked with the sacred powers permeating the cosmos. In ancient Egypt, for example, failure to comply with norms enacted in the name of Pharaoh, the god-king, constituted an offense far worse than a violation of humanly-ordained rules. Such disobedience was thought of as constituting a breach in the order of the cosmos itself, a breach which could conceivably disturb both the course of nature and the safety of the kingdom. To disobey the god-king was thus an act of sacrilege as well as rebellion against authority. [4]

The profound difference between biblical religion and that of ancient Egypt is evident in the Scriptural traditions concerning the covenant at Sinai. Most contemporary biblical scholars do not regard the "Hebrews" who escaped from Egypt as having been a single people at the time of the Exodus. The name "Hebrews" probably designated a number of groups of slaves, hostages and

resident aliens, each of whom retained something of their own distinctive religious and ethnic identity. [5] The "Hebrews" shared a common condition and a common social location in Egypt. They also shared a common yearning for liberation and a common loathing of their overlords. Nevertheless, their differences of origin, religion and culture were seemingly insurmountable obstacles to the formation of a viable community.

As soon as the "Hebrews" were beyond the reach of the Egyptians, their survival depended upon finding a compelling basis for unity beyond shared hatred. In the ancient Near East only religion could serve as the basis of group unity. The diverse escapees from Egyptian bondage could become a single people only if they were united in the service of a common God. That God had to be a new God rather than the ancestral god of one or another of the constitutent groups of escapees. The "Hebrews" shared a common historical experience; they shared neither kinship nor ancestral religion. Under the circumstances, ancestral gods could only impede group unity. Only a God, who was seen as the Author of their shared _historical_ experience and who was unrelated to the places of origin of any of the fugitive groups, could have unified them. _After_ the new God had unified the diverse peoples, it was natural for the newly united people to read back elements of continuity between the new God and their old, ancestral gods. Thus, the "God of Abraham," the "God of Isaac." and the "God of Jacob," originally quite distinct tribal

gods, could now be identified with Yahweh, the new God of the new nation, Israel.

From Israel's beginnings at Sinai this new God was thought of as sharing his power with no other being, human or divine. It was natural for the "Hebrew" escapees to believe that the Power responsible for their liberation was a divinity greater than the Egyptian god-king. Instead of Pharaoh's kingdom, there was to be a new kingdom ruled by a very different kind of a God, the God who had brought the "Hebrews" out of Egypt. At Sinai, the new God revealed himself,

> I am Yahweh your God who has brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." (Ex. 20:2)

Yahweh made no claim to be the ancestral God of the "Hebrews" nor did he identify Himself as belonging to any particular place as does the god-king of Egypt. Yahweh did demand the <u>exclusive</u> loyalty of those who were about to become his people:

> You shall have no other gods before me...for I am Yahweh, your God, a jealous God. (Ex. 20:3-5)

Yahweh's insistence on exclusive worship prevented the "Hebrews." now known as Israel, from developing the kind of sacralized political order, prevalent in Egypt, Mesopotamia and the city-states of Canaan. It finalized the break between the escapees and the god-kings of the ancient Near East. If Yahweh alone is God, it followed that the king could only be regarded as a purely human figure. The long-term political and cultural

effect of the covenant at Sinai was everywhere the same: whereas sacralized political orders such as that of ancient Egypt see the human and the divine realms as continuous, the new biblical understanding of the nature of man's encounter with divinity radically dichotomized the two realms. This is clearly stated by Deutero-Isaiah:

> For thy thoughts are not my thoughts, Neither are your ways my ways, saith Yahweh. For as the heavens are higher than the earth. So are my ways higher than your ways And my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isa. 55:8,9)

It took a long time before the full implications of the new rreligious vision became manifest. Nevertheless, after belief in an exclusive, supra-mundane God had desacralized the political institutions of the ancient Near East, it was only a question of time before all human institutions were denied any instrinsic sacrality. [6]. The cultural process whereby both the natural and the human world came to be regarded as devoid of inherent sacrality has been called Entzauberung der Welt, the disenchantment of the world. According to Max Weber, where disenchantment occurs, "there are in principle no mysterious forces that come into play, but rather one can, in principle, master all things by calculation." [7] As we know, it is the aspiration of the modern secular, technological world to "master all things by calculation."

If one wishes to find the origins of the modern secular world, one must look for its beginnings in the Bible's ancient faith in

a radically transcendent God. Only a religious faith that was radically polemic to the culture of magic and belief in indwelling spirits could have initiated the cultural, psychological and spiritual revolution necessary to cause entire civilizations to reject the gods and the spirits men had revered from time immemorial. Only a God can overturn the gods for the masses. Without faith in the new God, it would have been impossible to dethrone the old gods. Thus, secularization is the paradoxical, unintended, long-term consequence of a distinctive kind of religious faith and, by its very nature, secularization cannot be a force for cultural synthesis. By privatizing religion, secularization multiplies the number of value-systems that can co-exist within a common public realm. Instead of serving as the common inheritance of an entire community, religion becomes a matter of personal choice. The objectivity of a commonly held religious world is lost as a situation of religious pluralism develops. [8]

There is, however, much irony in so paradoxical a cultural achievement. Once the process of Entzauberung der Welt is initiated, it is difficult to halt until the limit of radical atheism is reached. The same skepticism which the original believers applied to the sacred claims of the king of Egypt was eventually applied to the heavenly Author of the covenant Himself. In place of a cultural universe in which all values are ultimately a function of the sacralized kingdom's requirement for

self-maintenance, we arrive in modern times at a world in which values no longer are regarded as having any ultimate ground, in which, save where the bonds of kinship remain unbroken, all too many human relationships are governed solely by calculations of utility. [9]

Neither in ancient times nor in modern times can biblical religion be regarded as a force for cultural synthesis. On the contrary, an indispensable component in the affirmation of biblical religion in ancient times was a radically polemic attitude towards the religious civilizations of the ancient Near East. This attitude affected every aspect of life including art, literature, politics, and personal ethics, all of which were inextricably bound up with religion. It was impossible to reject the gods of the ancient world without rejecting much of its civilization as well. Nevertheless, we cannot in retrospect fault the polemic attitude of biblical religion to the faiths and cultures of the ancient Near East. Without biblical religion's insistence on the radical sovereignty of its God and the non-being of all rival divinities, biblical man could not have developed the institutions and the religious life which have been so crucial for the development of the civilization of Christianity, Islam, and post-biblical Judaism. Whatever its shortcomings, monotheistic exclusivism was indispensable to the survival, at least in ancient times, of biblical religion.

It would, of course, be a misreading of history to regard

biblical man's rejections as uncompromising. Shorn of their obvious pagan allusions, elements of Babylonian, Egyptian, and Canaanite religious literature found their way into the corpus of Scripture. Psalm 29 is a good example of the process. Originally a Canaanite thunder-god hymn, the psalm has been transformed into a hymn in praise for the God of Israel. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to discern the underlying Canaanite allusions in our version of the Psalm:

> The voice of Yahweh is upon the waters: The God of glory thundereth: Yahweh upon many waters.

> The voice of Yahweh is powerful; The voice of Yahweh is full of majesty.

> The voice of Yahweh breaketh the cedars; Yea, Yahweh breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.

> He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.

> The voice of Yahweh divideth the flames of fire....

> The voice of Yahweh maketh the hinds to calve. (Ps. 29:3-9)

Similarly, although Athens and Jerusalem are usually regarded as dichotomous polarities, both rabbinic Judaism and Catholic Christianity attempted some degree of synthesis of biblical religion and Greek civilization. In the case of Judaism, a deliberate decision was made ca. 160 B.C.E. to assimilate a very large measure of Hellenistic culture. Because the Greeks never constituted a unified state, Greek culture was from its beginnings supranational. [10] Greek civilization exemplified a "tolerant universalism" which appeared to be the very antithesis

of Hebraic monotheistic exclusivism. Nevertheless, the Jewish religious mainstream did not entirely reject Hellenistic civilization. Rabbinic Judaism is largely the result of that cultural synthesis. Before the rise of rabbinic Judaism, the written law of Scripture was regarded as the primary source of authority within Israel. Over time the written law, when interpreted literally, failed to meet the needs of a changing community. The Sadducees insisted on the literal interpretation of Scriptural law. By contrast, the Pharisees assimilated the Greek idea of an unwritten law, the _agraphos_ _nomos_ which is to be found neither on stone nor papyrus but in the hearts of men, to their own religious life. The Pharisees were principally responsible for the rise of rabbinic Judaism which insisted upon the doctrine of the two-fold law. In place of the single written law, the Pharisees established the authority of _both_ the written law and the unwritten law, the _agraphos_ _nomos_, within Judaism. They insisted that the written law was to be understood in the light of the equally authoritative unwritten law. They also assimilated Greek civilization in establishing the authority of a class of educated men, the rabbis, in place of that of a priestly class whose claim to authority rested ultimately upon inherited status. Both the interpretive strategy and the elevation of a rabbinic form of _paideia_ to a supreme virtue prevented the ossification of Judaism and permitting a considerable measure of cultural synthesis. [11] One could cite many other examples of rabbinic cultural synthesis.

There were, of course, limits to the capacity of rabbinic Judaism for cultural synthesis. The fundamental limit was inherent in the rabbinic rejection of any hint of divine-human union. The broader possibilities of synthesis between biblical religion and the culture of the Graeco-Roman world became manifest with the rise of Roman Catholic Christianity with its fundamental doctrine of the Incarnation. Whereas rabbinic Judaism regarded the Graeco-Roman pantheon as too anthropomorphic, Catholic Christianity insisted that Graeco-Roman religion was not anthropomorphic enough. It asserted that the radically transcendent God of biblical monotheism had become incarnate in the life, suffering and death of Jesus Christ, thereby reconciling Creator and created order, spirit and flesh, the Infinite and the finite, Jewish transcendence with Greek immanence. As Hegel has pointed out, the divine-human reconciliation proclaimed by Christianity did not involve the rejection of either the Greek or the Jewish worlds. In the light of the Christian synthesis, both are seen as partial comprehensions of the truth whose full meaning is now grasped by Christianity. [12]

The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is a profound expression of the synthesizing consciousness. If God can descend to and become one with Christ in the manger and in the forlorn agony of the Cross, then there is no human domain in which God need be absent. The Incarnation also facilitates a partial

resacralization of the human world.   After God comes to be
regarded as fully present in the lowliest forms of human
experience, there is in principle no earthly domain which cannot
become the abode of divinity.   Moreover, the resacralization has
a retrospective aspect.   Just as the Church Fathers were able to
see anticipations of Christ in Scripture even when such
anticipations were not evident to the rabbis, so too it became
possible to discern Christ's presence in the pre-Christian,
Graeco-Roman world.   Since Christ was regarded as the Truth,
wherever Truth was found in the pre-Christian world one could
discern evidence of Christ's presence. Christianity was thus
able to assimilate much of the art, wisdom and culture of the
Graeco-Roman world and claim it as its own.

   Although the Church proved to be a far more effective force for
cultural synthesis than the Synagogue, there were limits even to
the Christian synthesis. While the Church could accept whatever
it could Christianize, it remained polemic to whatever proved
refractory to Christianization.   Both Asia and Islam refused the
Christian synthesis.   In the case of Islam, the very doctrine
which was at the heart of the Christian synthesis, namely, the
Incarnation, was asserted to be apostacy from true monotheism.
Moreover, even within Christendom, the reconciliation of Infinite
and finite which the Church claimed to have been accomplished in
Christ, was often experienced as an ideal rather than an actual
reconciliation.   Hegel's   description   of   the   "unhappy

consciousness." the medieval consciousness that experiences the profound split between the "sacred" heaven and the wholly "unsanctified" earth, testifies to the problematic character of the Christian synthesis. Hegel describes the problematic character of the Christian synthesis:

> In the medieval Christian world Truth remains a heavenly truth only, a Beyond. Actuality, the earthly element, is consequently God-forsaken and hence arbitrary; a few individuals are holy, not the others. In these others we see the holiness of the moment in the quarter of an hour of worship, and then for weeks a life of rudest selfishness and violence and of the most ruthless passion. Individuals fall from one extreme into the other, from the extreme of rude excess, lawlessness, barbarism, and self-will, into the renunciation of all things without exception, the conquest of all desires. [13]

The consciousness described by Hegel is a dirempted consciousness. In proclaiming the reconciliation of God and man, the Church had, at least for some of its adherents, only deepened the utter sense of the fallenness of the human condition and of the utter distance between sinful man and the Holy and Sovereign God. Ironically, the experience of the utter distance between God and man was to become the basis of a new hopefulness at the time of the Reformation. If the avenues leading from earth to heaven, which were supposed to link God and man, were blocked, there remained one possible link, that from heaven to earth. The sovereign and omnipotent God could freely and without cause bestow his grace upon fallen men and women, no matter how little deserving they might be.

The radical sovereignty of God and the unbridgeable gap between God and man was thus acknowledged with the onset of the Protestant Reformation. According to Ernst Troeltsch, the new element in Protestant theology initiated by Luther was "the special content of the conception of grace." [14] Whereas God's grace had formerly been regarded as a mystical reality linking God and man and imparted by the Church through the sacraments, within Protestantism grace came to be experienced as "a Divine temper of faith, conviction, spirit, knowledge, and trust...discerned as the loving will of God which brings about forgiveness of sins." [15]

The Reformation's insistence on the primacy of faith was in strong contrast to medieval religious values. According to historian Steven Ozment:

> The conviction that God and man must be like each other if they were ever to be at one with each other became the theological cornerstone of ...the later Middle Ages....Luther distanced himself from this fundamental medieval belief....He was ... struck by the way the righteous man confessed his utter dissimilarity from God....Recognition and confession of sin actually brought men together. In this sense "unlikeness" was the unitive principle in religion: to be conformed to God meant to agree with his judgment that all men are sinful and still belief his promise to save them nevertheless. [16]

Ernst Troeltsch further pointed out that the Reformation involved a "reduction of the whole of religion to that which alone can be an object of faith and trust, that is, to that idea of God...which represents Him as a gracious Will, holy, forgiving

sins..." [17]   Thus, a crucial element in the Protestant

Reformation was the truncation of religion from an all-embracing

system of rite, belief and culture to a system of faith and and

conviction. The sacred and the profane were sundered apart more

relentlessly than ever before. Luther even went so far as to

assert that the Devil was the "Prince of this World." More than

any of his predecessors Luther placed the whole weight of his

religious commitment on that which he held by faith.   Troeltsch

has commented that Luther's concentration on faith as the

decisive element in religion constituted "an enormous

simplification in doctrine." [18]

The difference between Luther's position and that of his

predecessors can be represented by the biblical image of Jacob's

ladder:

        And he dreamed: and, behold, a ladder set in the
     earth and its top in heaven, and the angels of God
     ascending and descending on it.(Gen. 28:12)

Jacob's ladder can be taken as a metaphor for the continuity of

the natural and the supernatural. the human and the divine, the

earthly and the heavenly. In theological terms the image

corresponds to the idea that there is an analogy of being

(analogia entis) between the realms of human experience and that

of Divinity. As noted above, this was the fundamental conviction

of the mainstream of medieval Christendom. That conviction

undergirded the medieval belief that natural man can be

reconciled with God and redeemed through the sacraments of the

Church. The supernatural power of this earthly institution was never seriously doubted. The sacraments were regarded as acts of love and, as such, represented the principle of union between God and man.

By contrast, Luther became convinced that there was no mystical ladder by which the natural could ascend to the supernatural. Rejecting the doctrine of *analogia* *entis*, the Reformation insisted that God was *totaliter* *aliter*, in the words of Karl Barth, *ganz* *anders*. Without extra-mundane divine intervention, no human institution, even the Church, could rescue man from the fate that awaited all natural beings. Man in nature was irretrievably lost. No atheistic existentialist ever held a bleaker image of the human condition than the image of man without God in Luther's thought. Luther once commented that he would rather be a sow than a man without Christ, because a sow does not have the fear and the anxiety to which natural man is condemned after the Fall.

It was Luther's unique contribution to the religious thought of his time to insist that, though man's fallen nature is hopelessly cut off from God, the graciousness and righteousness of God is such that sinful man can be reconciled to God. Nevertheless, such a reconciliation is entirely dependent on what God, not man, does. Moreover, the good news whereby we learn that of this reconciliation is to be found solely in Scripture, whose central message and whose true meaning is God's justification of man in

and through Christ.

The secularizing consequences of the dichotomization were not to become fully manifest until our own time when the otherness of the transcendent God became so irrevelant to the professional specialist as to become functionally irrelevant, if not non-existent. It is at that point that voices are heard among the cultural elite proclaiming the death of God. Even more problematic are those modern specialists who give lip service to faith in God while insisting on the value-neutral _wertfrei_ character of their domains of competence.

Yet another element in the decline of any sense of unity between divinity and humanity at the time of the Reformation was the displacement of the _symbolic consciousness_, which had been a predominant element in the religious sensibility of Catholicism. by the _literal consciousness_ which became the predominant sensibility of mainstream Protestantism. The new consciousness was typified by Luther's assertion that "the literal sense of Scripture alone is the whole essence of faith and of Christian theology." [19] Whereas symbolic consciousness apprehends unmanifest resemblances and relations between seemingly discrete words, phenomena, and events, literal consciousness insists on the hard, matter-of-fact, concreteness of discrete words, phenomena and events. Symbolic consciousness is thus a force for cultural synthesis. By contrast, literalism rejects synthesis. If _only one_ meaning of the text can be the true meaning, it

follows that all other meanings are false. Since whatever knowledge man can have of God is regarded as having been revealed in Scripture, insistence on a single, literal meaning of the text entails the rejection as false of those religious traditions based upon alternative readings. There could be only one true religion. All the others were irredeemably without merit. One has but to recall the utter violence of Luther's diatribes against his opponents, especially "papists" and Jews, to see that neither Luther nor his spiritual heirs were interested in cultural synthesis. [20]

Moreover, there is a direct line between Protestant literalism, with its reduction of meaning to a single meaning, and the rise of modern critical and historical scholarship. That scholarship could not exist without the plodding, single-mindedness of the professional specialist who knows one thing well. The aim of Protestant literalism was to establish "the plain meaning of Scripture." The aim of modern historical scholarship is "to establish for historical events a single simple, solid, and constant meaning-what _really_ happened," Ranke's "_Wie es eigentlich gewesen ist_." [21] But, to establish the single meaning, whether of Scripture or of any other phenomenon, is to disconnnect things, to define them by what they are not. In time, not only are words and texts disconnected from each other, so too are the scholarly and scientific disciplines, each of which becomes the domain of the professional specialist who knows

one thing well but seldom is capable of relating what he knows to a larger context. What begins as the experience of the incommensurability of God and man becomes the atomization of culture and knowledge.

It would, however, be a mistake to see every expression of Protestantism as a force for the rejection of cultural synthesis. On the contrary, the classical attempt at cultural, historical, religious and philosophical synthesis of the modern era, the system of Hegel, was regarded by its author as identical with the realized content of Protestant Christian faith. It is especially interesting to note how Hegel handled the conflicting claims of the literal and symbolic consciousness. Characteristically, he refused to regard either as without merit. Reformulating Immanuel Kant's distinction between the understanding (Verstand) and Reason (Vernunft), Hegel defined understanding's activity as the analytic definition, organization and the fixation of phenomena. He insisted on the hard, concrete, matter-of-fact quality of the events and the existents of the empirical world. He characterized (Verstand) as "isolated reflection." The literal consciousness to which we have referred is largely identical with Hegel's use of Verstand.

At the same time, Hegel insisted that Verstand could only apprehend a partial and limited aspect of reality. He argued that the finite empirical existence apprehended by Verstand is actually a self-manifestation and a self-expression of the

single, universal, infinite life underlying and ultimately comprising all of reality. Beyond the empirical world of dichotomous oppositions and the limited, isolated entities, there is, according to Hegel, a unified totality that can be rationally and conceptually grasped. The finite perspectives of the rational subject are not false, but they are partial. They constitute a developmental stage within the all-encompassing activity of speculative reason or Vernunft which is the Absolute. [22] Far from being in contradiction with each other, it is Reason itself which both manifests itself in the fixed oppositions and comprehends the oppositions as part of the universal totality. Concrete entities are not denied. Nevertheless, "every individual entity has meaning and significance only in relation to the whole."

There is, however, in Hegel a steadfast refusal to dissolve that which is limited and particular into an undifferentiated absolute. Hegel thus rejected the kind of intellectual strategy attempted in his own time by the early Schelling and in ours by Norman O. Brown and other assorted Romantics. Hegel insisted that division is "a necessary factor in a life that forms itself through eternal opposing." According to Hegel, the Absolute exists only in and through the antagonism, conflict and differentiation of its finite constituent entities. [23] Hegel's insistence upon the indispensability of each and every finite event and entity as an expression of the self-realization of the

underlying Absolute led him to attempt to comprehend all of nature and history as expressions of the self-unfolding, self-developing, rational totality. Instead of seeing God, man and nature as dichotomous realities, Hegel insisted upon the "identity of identity and non-identity." He sought to demonstrate that man in his historical development and nature in its evolution were but expressions of the self-unfolding nature of the one, ultimate Divine reality. [24]

The roots of Hegel's assertion of the divine-human reconciliation and ultimate union are to be found in the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. Nevertheless, for Hegel, religion can only anticipate that reconciliation in the subjectivity of feeling and faith. Philosophy alone can attain the reconciliation in its comprehensiveness. According to Hegel, the ultimate reconciliation of man and God could only be attained through the activity of Vernunft. More than any other religion, Christianity pointed to the ultimate reconciliation, but even it was compelled to resort to the images of the religious consciousness rather than Reason, which alone could grasp the rational interconnectedness of all the disparate domains of concrete particularity as manifestations of a single whole. Indeed, far from being man's knowledge of God, true philosophy, that is, Hegelian philosophy, was nothing less than God's fully rational, fully comprehended knowledge of Himself as He is in Himself. [25]

It did not take long for the Hegelian reconciliation to fall apart. Indeed, the history of modern thought is largely the story of the breakdown of the synthesis. This is not the occasion to discuss that story save to note that Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, Marx, Nietzsche and Karl Barth all give expression to the breakdown. [26]

Nevertheless, in spite of the failure of the Hegelian synthesis, Hegel's attempt at reconciliation does point to an indispensable component in any religious attempt at cultural synthesis. When Hegel insisted that the Absolute could not truly be ultimate if it excluded the differentiations and antagonisms of the empirical world, he was offering a model for cultural integration as well as philosophical comprehension. Hegel's refusal to dissolve the empirical world into the non-differentiation of the Absolute extended was paralleled by his insistence upon the validity of the claims of both the autonomous individual and the rational structure of the modern state:

> The principle of the modern states has prodigious strength and depth because it allows the principle of subjectivity to progress to its culmination in the extreme of self-subsistent personal particularity, and yet at the same time brings it back to substantive unity and so maintains this unity in the principle of subjectivity itself. [27]

As we have seen, there are conditions under which religion can serve as a force for cultural integration. To the extent that a religious tradition is able to accept the givenness, integrity

and authenticity of all domains of culture, including other religious traditions, it can be such a force. As noted, this was Hegel's intellectual and theological strategy. To the extent that a tradition insists on the exclusive authority of its own claims, it will only intensify the conflicts of value and culture which abound in our times.

In addition to the issue of theological exclusivism, there is the further issue of the extent to which religions serve to express and to legitimate the aspirations of the communities which constitute their social base. To the extend that they fulfill this function for communities in conflict, religion will not foster cultural synthesis. For example, the conflict between the Protestants and Catholics of Northern Ireland is far more a communal than a religious or an ideological conflict. Under the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the Protestantism of Northern Ireland is far more insistent upon the false character of alternative religious and cultural visions than is England's far less embattled Anglican Church. Similarly, the Calvinism of the Afrikaaners of South Africa can hardly be thought of as a fostering any kind of integration. That is hardly surprising given the embattled circumstances of the Afrikaaner community. These are by no means isolated examples. The exploding conflicts between communities of different culture and origin throughout the world have tended to intensify the exclusive claims of the religions involved and thereby to exacerbate religious

conflicts. This process is visible in the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism in Iran and elsewhere in the Islamic world as well as the fundamentalism of both the Christian and Jewish world. Wherever fundamentalism flourishes its exclusive claims are an impediment to cultural synthesis. The exclusive claims of the fundamentalists are in any event largely motivated to by the desire to halt whatever cultural synthesis has taken place within the community involved.

Fundamentalism also encourages specialization and intellectual compartmentalization. No nation could survive today were it to abandon contemporary science and technology, including social science. Fundamentalist religions are no less in need of science and technology than are more latitudinarian traditions. However, fundamentalist traditions must limit the extent to which contemporary science and social science can challenge their exclusive claims. It can do that best by compartmentalizing knowledge so that the insights of the separate disciplines are not applied to the religion. We see that process at work in the United States where those who assert the inerrancy of Scripture have attempted to limit the teaching of the theory of evolution in the public school system. Similar strategies have been employed in the fields of literature and social science.

The recent rise of Fundamentalism and/or conservative religious institutions in Christianity, Judaism and Islam can also be seen as a sectarian response to the disorienting tendencies of a world

in which the mass communication media and sheer life experience have confront millions of believers with a pluralism of religious and secular values as well as a multiplicity of competing religious traditions. As noted, many of the competing values are hostile to or, at best, indifferent to religion. In the face of such challenges religious traditions have often adopted a sectarian response to defend the credibility of their cognitive claims. Although the terms "church" and "sect" are often thought of as opposites, under threat even religious traditions claiming universality, such as the Roman Catholic Church, are likely to behave as if they were sects. As Peter Berger has observed:

> The sect...serves as a model for organizing a cognitive minority against a hostile or at least non-believing milieu. [28]

The sect divides the world into the "elect" or "saved" true believers, the "children of light," and the non-believing majority, the "children of darkness." Insofar as the sect is able, it seeks to protect the "children of light" from religious, social, cultural and moral contamination by the "children of darkness. Its basic strategy is withdrawal from the "world" and the creation of a cognitively autonomous sub-community. The Khomeini phenomenon, the defensive theological posture adopted by the Roman Catholic Church between Vatican I (1870) and Vatican II to counter the inroads of a secularizing modernity, and the separatism of contemporary Hasidic Judaism are all expressions of the sectarian response. Obviously, such a response is hardly

calculated to foster cultural synthesis.

   Finally, there is the question of the prospects for the
foreseeable future. Many leading historians and sociologists of
religion have concluded that those religious movements which
insist upon the exclusive character of their claims to truth are
gaining significantly in number and strength in contemporary
America. Put differently, the sectarian response is gaining
strength in the United States as well as in much of the world
beyond North America. [29] While we cannot explore the reasons
for this development, it is clear that at no time in memory has
Fundamentalist Christianity been so decisive a cultural and
political force in the United States as at present.   Moreover,
the strength, influence and numbers of American Fundamentalism
and conservative Evangelical Protestantism is likely to grow as
Americans feel their way of life seriously challenged by the
military competition of the Soviet bloc and the economic and
technological competition of the nations of non-communist Asia,
especially Japan. Faced with an increasingly successful external
challenge, large numbers of Americans are likely to turn to
America's religio-cultural roots. And, those roots are largely
sectarian, Fundamentalist Protestant. If one were to hazard an
educated guess, in the foreseeable future some of the most
powerful and influential religious groups in the United States
will be forces for intellectual and vocational specialization and
against cultural synthesis.

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1. Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation" in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 135.

2. Weber, "Bureaucracy" in Gerth and Mills, From Max Weber, p. 229.

3. See Max Weber, Ancient Judaism, trans. and ed. Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale, Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1952, pp. 313 ff.

4. See Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion, Garden City, L. I.: Anchor Books, 1969, pp. 113ff.

5. See Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, London:1973, Vol. I, pp. 8-9, 20.

6. See Berger, The Sacred Canopy, pp. 106ff.

7. Weber. "Science as a Vocation" in From Max Weber, p. 139.

8. See Peter Berger, op. cit., pp. 127-53.

9. See Robert Bellah, et. al. Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985.

10. See Elias Bickermann, "The Maccabees" in From Esra to the Last of the Maccabees, New York: Schocken Books, 1962, p. 102-3.

11. See Emil L. Fackenheim, Encounters Between Judaism and Modern Philosophy, New York: Basic Books, 1973, pp. 101-10.

12. See Emil L. Fackenheim, Encounters Between Judaism and Modern Philosophy, p. 112.

13. G. W. F. Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, trans. E. S. Haldane and F. H. Simpson, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1895), Vol. III. pp. 52-3.

14. Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches, New York:1960, Vol. II, p. 468.

15. Troeltsch, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 469.

16. Steven Ozment, The Age of Reform:1250-1550, New Haven:1980,

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17. Troeltsch, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 469.

18. Troeltsch, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 470.

19. Perry Miller, Roger Williams. New York: 1962, pp. 34-35, cited by Norman O. Brown, Love's Body, New York: Vintage Books, 1966, p. 192.

20. See, for example, Martin Luther, "On the Jews and Their Lies," trans. Martin H. Bertram in Franklin Sherman and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds., Luther's Works, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957, pp. 137-192.

21. Brown, op. cit. p. 198.

22. See John Edward Toews, Hegelianism: The Path to Dialectical Humanism, 1805-1841, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 51 for his interpretation of Verstand and Verstand.

23. Hegel, "Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie" (1801) in G. W. F. Hegel, Werke, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. Michel, Frankfurt: 1969), Vol. II, pp. 20-21, cited by Toews, op. cit. p. 52.

24. Hegel, Phanomenologie des Geistes, in Moldenhauer and Michel, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 16-20.

25. See Emil L. Fackenheim, The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought, Boston: Beacon Press, 1967, pp. 138-159, 193-222.

26. The breakdown of the Hegelian system is discussed in Toews, op. cit. and Karl Lowith, From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteen-Century Thought, trans. David Green, Garden City: Anchor Books, 1967.

27. G. W. F. Hegel, Hegel's Philosophy of Right, ed. and trans. T. M. Knox, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 161. See also Shlomo Avineri, Hegel's Theory of the Modern State, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

28. Peter Berger, THe Sacred Canopy, p. 164.

29. See Robert C. Liebman and Robert Wuthnow, eds., The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation, New York: Aldine, 1983.