



**New College
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**Sociology of Religion
Honours Class**

**If Scotland is a Secularized Country, why is the
Episcopal Church growing?**

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Aim

My aim in this essay is to examine whether the data presented in the 1994 Scottish Churches survey published as *Prospects for Scotland 2000* can determine whether Scotland is a secularized country, and to evaluate the data for the Scottish Episcopal Church in light of this.

Method

I shall first examine the results of the 1994 Scottish Churches survey, with a particular emphasis on the figures for the Scottish Episcopal Church, compared with the figures for the national church, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church. Following an evaluation of the material presented in *Prospects for Scotland 2000* I shall give a definition of what is meant by 'secularization' and draw an outline of what this means in practice. Against this I shall forward some criticisms of the theory making mention of the Scottish situation, before making my conclusion that Scotland cannot be regarded as a truly secular society and that despite the impression from *Prospects for Scotland 2000* that the Scottish Episcopal Church is also in decline, though not as rapidly as the Church of Scotland.

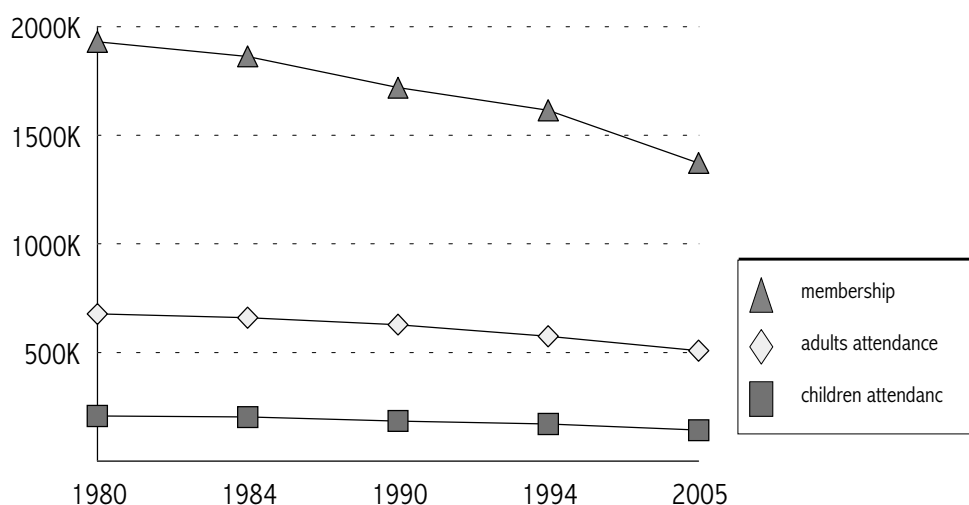
Situation Today

In 1994 the Scottish Episcopal Church participated in the national census of church attendance and trends, based on the figures for one 'normal' Sunday, 30 October 1994; the results were published as *Prospects for Scotland 2000* the following year. The response to the census was quite promising with 81% of the 4,162 churches invited to take part returning completed forms. This was higher than both the previous Scottish census a decade previous (75%) and the English church census in 1989 (70%). Of the 50 denominations involved the Scottish Episcopal Church provided the highest response with 286 of the 311 churches (92%) returning figures. The results showed the following picture: in the decade 1984 - 1994 there was a decline in attendance, compared against the total Scottish population, of 3%, from 17% to 14%; a period when the adult population in Scotland was static and the child population had declined slightly.

The figures for Scottish church attendance and membership, when compared with previous statistics, showed a gradual decline over the last fourteen years and predicted a continued

decline into the next millennium, should current trends continue (see Table and Fig. 1 below).

Fig.1 Figures for The Church in Scotland



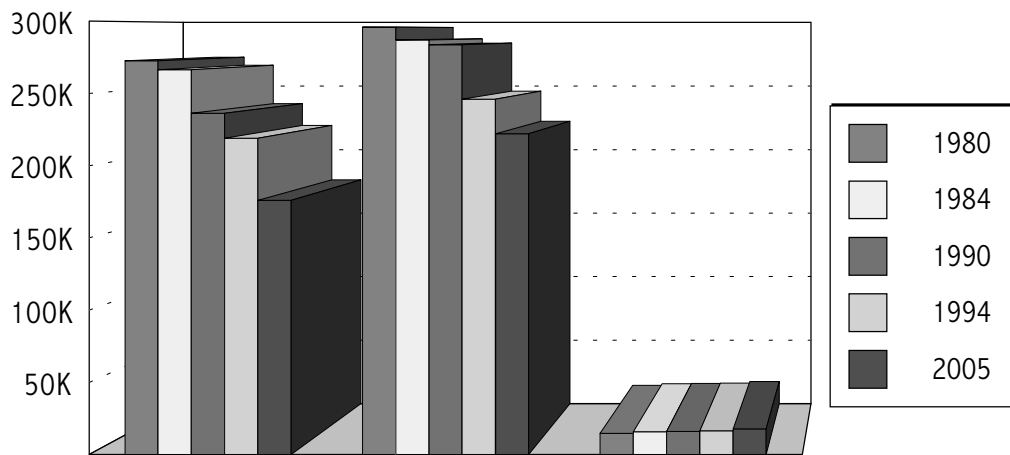
This means that between 1984 and 1994 117,200 people left the churches in Scotland, which breaks down to 11,700 a year, or 225 per week - and given that the average size of congregation in Scotland at the time was 222, this gives the worrying statistic that the Church is losing the equivalent of one congregation every week - and that this trend has been continuing every week for the last ten years. The survey also discovered, however, that at least 231 new churches opened during the decade 1984 - 1994, while at least 130 churches closed during that period, giving a net increase of 101 new churches. So, the actual situation is not as disheartening as it first appeared, though it is bad: there are new churches opening (more than are closing) and churches are attracting people, though not as many compared with the number of people leaving (admittedly some through natural causes). We can conclude then that the congregations which do stay open do so with, on average, a smaller congregation.

Membership and Attendance

The data for membership and attendance can be examined for each denomination. A cursory investigation of the figures shows that not all of the churches in Scotland are being affected to the same degree. The figures for the Scottish Episcopal Church, in particular, make interesting reading, especially when compared with the same figures for both the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church. Focusing on adult attendance decline, the Church of Scotland appears to take the brunt of it, with the Roman Catholic church in tow, a decade decline of 17.7% and 14.3% respectively. However, over the same period the Episcopal

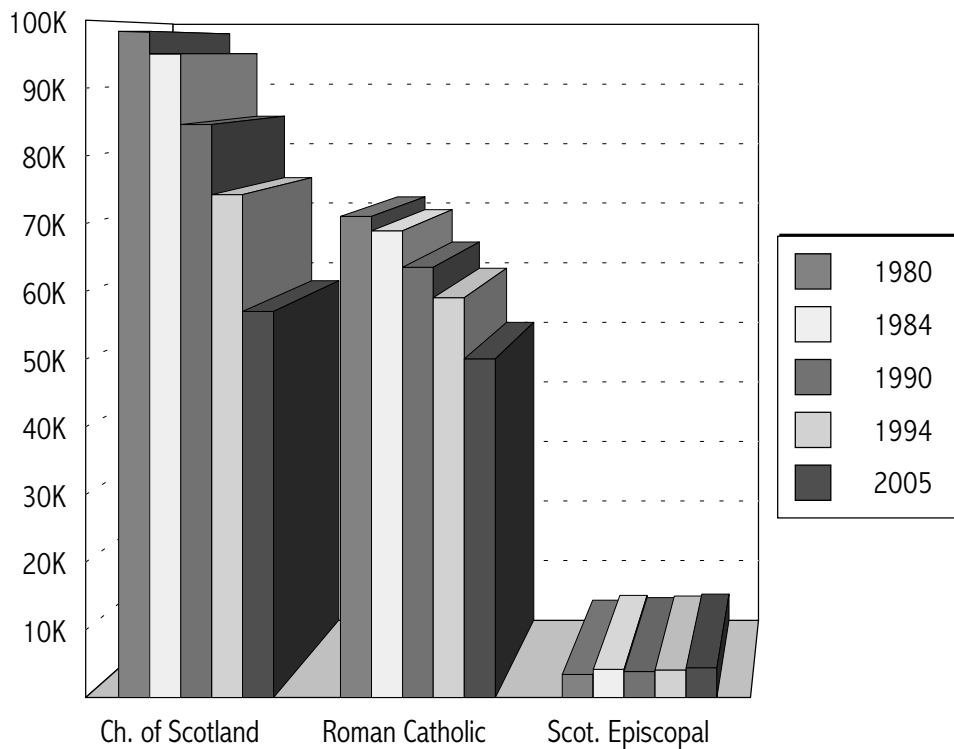
Church appears to have grown in weekly attendance 2.9%, from 15,830 in 1984 to 16,290 in 1994 (see *Fig.2* below). The census acknowledges that the overall adult attendance increase between 1984 and 1994 is due largely to the influence of St. Thomas's, Corstorphine in Edinburgh, an independent Anglican chapel which joined the Episcopal Church in 1991 bringing with it 350 members, already having 'planted' a congregation at St. Paul's and St. George's in 1985, gifting them 70 members; St. Paul's and St. George's subsequently grew to over 400 attenders in 1994. However, taking this post-1985 activity into account the census still shows that the greatest growth in the Scottish Episcopal Church was between 1980 and 1984 with a 9% rise.

Fig. 2 Adult Attendance - All Scotland



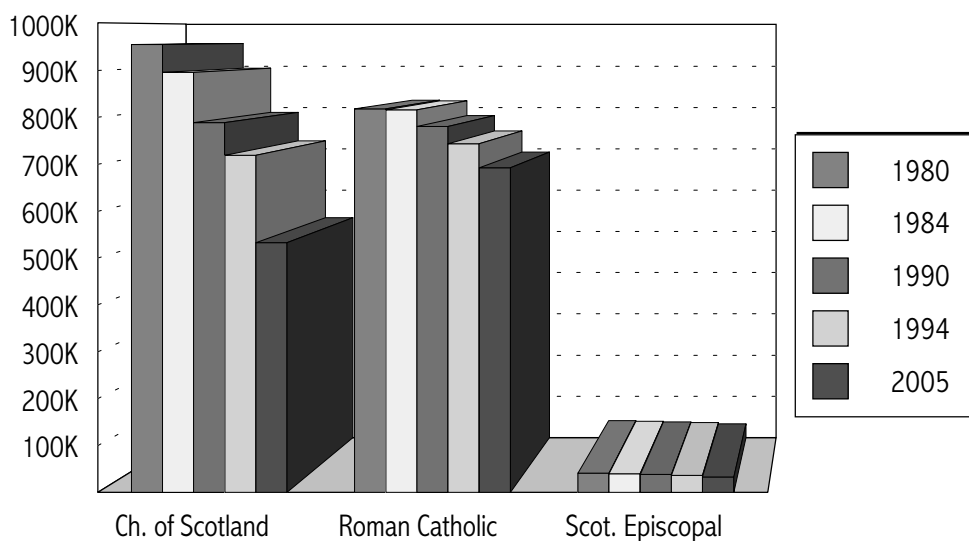
Children's attendance similarly grew healthily between 1980 and 1984 (up 23% from 3,390 to 4,170), sinking 8% in the mid-eighties before recovering a further 6% in the four years leading up to the 1994 survey. This is in stark contrast with the figures for the Church of Scotland which show nearly a 25% fall between 1980 (98,360) and 1994 (74,240), and the Roman Catholic Church which suffered a 18% decline in the same period showing figures of 71,050 in 1980 and 59,030 in 1994 (see *Fig.3* below).

Fig.3 Children Attendance - All Scotland



In contrast to this increase in both adult and children's attendance, Scottish Episcopal Church membership fell during this time from 39,610 in 1984 to 36,240 in 1994 (an 8% fall). In comparison, membership of the Church of Scotland fell 21% from 893,920 to 717,930, and membership of the Roman Catholic Church dropped 9% from 814,400 to 742,300 during that decade (see Fig.4 below).

Fig.4 Church Membership - All Scotland



Regarding the movement in size of congregations, between 1990 and 1994 over half (65%) of Scottish Episcopal Church congregations remained static, 6% declined and 29% grew. Comparable figures for the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic church are: in the Church of Scotland 74% remained static, 7% declined and 19% grew; while in the Roman Catholic church 87% remained static, 5% declined and 8% grew.

Evaluation of *Prospects for Scotland 2000*

Examining the data presented in the survey, in the Scottish Episcopal Church Review journal in 1997, Revd. Dr. Gavin White asks two questions: is the data reliable, and can anything be done about it? His answer to the first question is yes it probably is, but adds that "this is not the best way in which to study church statistics". (Gavin White in *Scottish Episcopal Church Review* Vol. 6 No. 1, Summer 1997, p.71) His main criticism is that even if the data here is accurate, there is nothing over the past fifty years against which to compare these figures in order to see how patterns are changing and forming. It is clear that numerical decline began in the 1920s, though the Church of Scotland claims to have warded off decline for three decades further. However, White argues that

there are two reasons why their numbers appear to have been on a plateau from 1920 until the late 1950s. First there is a tradition of keeping "lines" or names on rolls even when little is meant by this, and, second, when decline bites it first hits the non-communicant fringe, originally greater than the communicant core, driving most of them out and making that stance uncomfortable for the remainder who then move to communicant status. (White, *op. cit.* p.72)

This question of membership, of people maintaining an attachment with a church - belonging but not attending - is an important one to which I shall later return.

Regarding the figures for Episcopalians, White notes that they appear in *Prospects for Scotland 2000*, as they seem to have done also in *Prospects for Scotland 1985*, as a success. Can we really believe that in the face of such apparent decline the Episcopalians are the lone boat on a sea of sinking ships who are actually getting somewhere? White answers, probably not! His answers are two-fold. Firstly he acknowledges the addition of St. Thomas',

Edinburgh to the Episcopal Church, to which I have already alluded; the second he says stems from the nature of the survey. This is his reasoning:

In 1994 they asked for figures on one Sunday only, plus a figure for 1990, and that was comparatively simple and may have brought a more complete response than the survey in 1984 which was for several Sundays. Certainly the figures for 1990 and 1995 seem less spongy than those of 1980 and 1984 or, since 1984 was not too difficult, the figures for 1980 which are decidedly suspect. As far as Episcopalians are concerned, only half the churches even tried to answer for 1980. If many churches could not or would not answer, it suggests others used guesswork. And between the four points at which soundings have been taken, it is from 1980 until 1984 that growth in attendance is greatest. Discount the 1980 figure and discount the Edinburgh special circumstances and there is no growth at all. And the prediction of 9% growth by 2005 A.D. also fails. Episcopalians are falling, but slowly, and no worse than, for instance, the Baptists. (White, *op. cit.* p.73)

Having briefly examined the data presented in *Prospects for Scotland 2000*, which on the surface appears to indicate that the Scottish Episcopal Church is the only Christian church in the country which is growing, but which Revd. Dr. Gavin White believes to be an optical illusion given the peculiar situation in Edinburgh, how the figures were collected and the issue of membership vs. attendance for determining the religiosity of a nation, I want now to look at the general theory of secularization to see whether we can find any reasons for believing that Gavin White's assessment is correct.

Definition of 'Secularization'

The term 'secularization' can be used to describe two particular phenomena: firstly, it is used to describe the decline in the extent of religious observance within a particular society; and secondly, it is also the name given to a general belief about history, namely that the development of society is dialectically progressive: as society progresses towards modernization it depends less on a religious understanding of itself and so religion loses its position of authority and legitimation. This general theory of secularization prescribes two developments: that the decline of religion is both inevitable and desirable. Should one be

able to determine whether a society is indeed secularized, it should be easy to demonstrate therefore that the decline of religion and religious adherence is also apparent.

It has long been believed, by sociologists of religion, that the decline in religious adherence is an inevitable process, following an Hegelian understanding of the gradual progression of history within industrialised society. As a society becomes secularized two phenomena occur: one, there is a reduction in the social significance of religious institutions, and two, there is a decline in people's participation in religious rituals. As we have seen above the results of the 1994 churches census show that overall while there are new churches opening, overall people's participation in Sunday worship in the Church in Scotland is declining. If secularization is a gradual process, a case of society repeating patterns and adapting to new ones until it arrives at a new paradigm, can we then prove that Scotland is, or is in the process of becoming secularized, given the *Prospects for Scotland 2000* data?

A general theory of 'Secularization'

Secularization is a theory of modernity, in which rationality and scientific explanations of the world take precedence over a religious worldview. It is an example of a paradigm shift through which the church loses the monopoly worldview. As Don Cupitt puts it

instead of seeing the world in terms of poetry, myth and symbol... we have come to see the world in terms of mathematical frameworks and structural regularities. Instead of explaining things by reference to occult spiritual powers, we explain them by reference to a built-in law-abidingness. (Cupitt, 1984, p.30)

I have already acknowledged Bryan Wilson's definition of secularization as the process through which religious thinking, practice, and institutions 'lose their social significance'. It can already be implied by these broad definitions that the process of secularization is referring particularly to Western industrialised society, and that the 'religion' which is being undermined is Christianity. David Martin confirms this when he holds that "secularization is largely restricted to cultures where the ecclesiastical institution stands in close relationship to the wider society and power structure, but nevertheless remains separate" (Martin, 1969, p.49), and again, "it follows that [by] the term 'religion' in this context I mean Christianity, its characteristic ethos, institutions and beliefs". (Martin, 1978, p.2) Secularization is a thesis

about Christianity. Furthermore, it is a thesis based on a particular philosophical understanding of history.

Gordon Graham, writing in the journal *Philosophy* believes the general theory of secularization to be best understood as a special application of Hegel's theory of the progressive, developmental nature of history: firstly, "it is a dialectical process in which better social forms, whose denizens have a higher level of self-understanding, emerge from less good ones. Secondly, an important part of the final culmination is its rationalization of Christianity into philosophy" (Graham, 1992, p.184). This view of history as a progressive development has three important consequences: the decline of religion is both inevitable - a phase which human beings eventually outgrow - and desirable - discarding primitive beliefs and practices in favour of a more enlightened mode of thought, and thirdly, the decline of religion is believed to be quite apparent. Let me explain.

Secularization theory examines the conditions under which religious institutions become less powerful and religious beliefs become less easily accepted. If secularization is to be understood as an exclusive phenomenon of modernity then we must briefly examine the variety of entrance points into modernity offered by the secularization theory. There are five processes of social change I would like to briefly examine: rationalization, differentiation, socialisation, legitimation and privatisation and individuation. I shall address these in turn. *Rationalisation* is the process by which people organise certain areas of social life according to the criteria of means-ends (or functional) rationality. This is the conviction that all phenomena can be explained rationally. As Gordon Graham puts it "the idea is that the developing intellectual structures which gave rise to modern science and technology, with their resultant prosperity, have created a mentality which can no longer accept the magical and supernatural elements that are an essential part of religion" (Graham, 1992, p.189). As such those institutional spheres which can be rationally explained are regarded as 'serious' (i.e. science, medicine, law, academia, etc.) while those spheres which cannot be subjected to rational, systematic exploration and dissection (i.e. religion, imagination, fantasy, play, etc.) are regarded as non-serious and are relegated to the realms of one's private life. As Wilson puts it, "the system no longer functions... to fulfil the will of God" without taking into account the cost of this in terms of the emotional support religion offers (Acquaviva, 1993, p.47).

Secondly, social and *institutional differentiation* is the process whereby the various institutional spheres become separated from each other, each performing a specific specialised function. This is necessarily conditioned by the rationalization process, as a 'modern' understanding of society can no longer function effectively under the patronage of the church, and can be witnessed in the gradual disintegration in the link between church and state. Where once the two were mutually joined, the monarch being seen as a priestly figure, they are now quite distinct. During the Middle Ages the church defined and administrated social behaviour, law, health and medicine, education and accommodation. In modern society these areas have almost exclusively been transferred to secular control in the form of police forces, social services, judiciary services, health boards, education boards and hotels. Another important aspect of social differentiation is the effect it has on a persons ability to become mobile and therefore the strains it places on personal and local relations. The local and familiar is subverted. No longer do people simply remain in their home towns learning local skills contributing to their local community. Rather they are encouraged to train for specific, specialized lines of employment, which firstly, makes them more difficult to re-employ in the local area, which, secondly, enables, or even encourages them to move out of the area to find employment. As a result industrial and organizational relations replace local community relations, which is the basis upon which religion - especially Christianity - relies; urban society replaces small rural communities. As an example, large chain supermarkets replace smaller, local grocery shops; large international electronics firms monopolise the employment in local towns with the effect that should the business fail or relocate the local town is greatly effected. This is the third: the replacement of the local with the global is the process known as *societalisation*.

Each of these processes assume one underlying belief: Hegel's understanding that history is progressive. He believed, amongst others, that "through succeeding stages, the human mind reaches higher levels of self-understanding, and the culminating stage is that in which self-understanding is complete" (Graham, 1992, p.191). In other words, through philosophical and sociological progression human beings would reclaim all aspects of their lives from the safe-keeping of the religious institutions; they would learn to walk on their own, unaided, and throw away the crutch of religion. So far so good, for Hegel.

As rationalization determines the direction of institutional differentiation, the knock-on effect is that institutional differentiation determines the fourth aspect of secularization theory, *legitimation*. With the break-down of the church and church-controlled institutions into

separated, specialised organisations it follows that the authority which the church once commanded is now transferred with the specialized-task to the control of the differentiated organisation. In other words, authority is now based on that of the specialized role or office. On the whole, people no longer look to the church for advice and direction about health matters, education, or the justness of a particular war or conflict. Society becomes pluralised: the church is deprived of its taken-for-granted status, and becomes yet another social agency competing for legitimacy, it becomes yet another shop in the marketplace trying to sell its worldview. This has a detrimental effect, however, on society, and distinguishes modern society from that of so-called 'traditional' society: there is a loss of , what Meredith B. McGuire calls a sense of a shared conception of order, a shared sense of moral community. Hegel achieves his inevitable, desirable, apparent loss of religion, with an enlightened, post-capitalist, technological society, but at a cost. Cupitt traces this process back to the twelfth century:

The process of secularization has been going on very slowly for a very long time. Its beginning, at the height of Christian civilization in the twelfth century, seems to be connected with the fact that Christianity makes a sharper distinction than other faiths between the clergy and the laity, and between the sacred and secular. The faith itself tended to push political and economic man away, out into a non-religious realm. In time, that secular realm of politics, economics, science and technology outgrew and overwhelmed the sacred. Religion lost its influence in public life, and in the past century or so has even lost much of its influence in private life as well. (Cupitt, 1984, p.30).

If there has been a diminished, if not extinguished common worldview then there are bound to be problems at the level of each individual; people will search for sources of identity, not at the social level, but at the individual level. Individual concerns will be seen as distinct from the social group. There will be a private search for beliefs. As David Martin says religion becomes a private matter in a pluralist society (Martin, 1969, p.49)

Society then has been broken up into pieces. While society was once held together by the co-operative integration of church and state, the church has been privatised, sold off by department to private institutions who now control and define their particular sphere, with no

reference to the Divine. The world, as a result, is viewed in terms of philosophy, mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology rather than in terms of theology, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Society as such, the sense of a collected whole, has been diminished, in favour of a pluralist free-for-all; everyone for themselves. People are no longer looking for ultimate meaning and satisfaction in the Church, or in God, they are looking for ultimate meaning in themselves. Religion is seen as marginal to life's prime concerns. People too, have become indifferent to charismatic appeals, whether it is politics, charity or the church, as they are increasingly being seen as 'nothing to do with me'. Every man is an island, it seems in this secularized society. The 'I' takes precedence over the 'us'. Compare, for example, the marked decline in charitable donations compared with the monetary giving to the National Lottery, or the decline in the number of adherents to voluntary bodies, clubs, political parties. The church is not the only institution who is suffering a decline in its membership. David Martin agrees with this when he argues that "all institutions expand and decline for a wide variety of reasons, and religious institutions are no exception. For example, the contemporary decline in religious institutions may be part of the general malaise which is offsetting every kind of social institution in a time of rapid social change" (Martin, 1969, p.16). Martin goes further in his criticism of using the term 'secularization' to describe attendance decline when he argues that it is often a very Catholic definition of religion that is used when speaking about secularization, that is, one that "lays stress on membership or (or relation to) an institution" (Martin, 1969, p.14). Further to this criticism, a point which is relevant to the situation in Scotland, is that in the Protestant definition of religion individualism, rather than being decried, is highly valued, with the effect that "Protestant cultures are almost incapable of secularization in Protestant terms, since those who do not attend can regard themselves as better Christians than those who do" (Martin, 1969, p.14). Furthermore, one of the main obstacles to studying and defining whether a particular society is in the process of secularization is exactly the point that I have been arguing: while he argues that "the only useful employment of the concept of secularization requires that religion is designated in terms of particular modes of thinking and acting rather than in terms derived from usage" (Martin, 1969, p.15) i.e. as best understood within an Hegelian conception of the progression of history, he concludes his chapter on "Eliminating the Concept of Secularization" by saying that "the vastly varied religious situation needs to be studied apart from the pressure to illustrate a philosophical position" (Martin, 1969, p.22).

Criticism of Secularization Theory and the Scottish situation

There are a number of problems with the theory of secularization as it stands. For one, it implies that history is unilinear, that 'a' always leads to 'b', that leads to 'c', etc. Social change however, is far more complex than that. There are many factors which come into play, both internally and externally, which sociologists have identified. In the Scottish situation, for example, internally, there is the question of the influence of Calvinism and its effects on the growth of capitalism in Scotland; there is the nineteenth century influx of Irish families to the west coast and the rise of a significant Roman Catholic presence which opens up the question of how the Presbyterian church can lay claim to being the 'national' church; externally, there is of course the influence of Scotland's neighbour, England. On the one hand the Hegelian framework of history predicts the inevitable decline of religion and/or religiosity, actual history demonstrates something different. Perhaps one of the problems with the Church has been its eagerness to jump on the modern bandwagon, as it were, too ready to allow its faith to be converted into philosophy. It seems to have rested on its laurels for too long, taken for granted its perceived position in society and expected things to continue as it always has been. The church of God is the church of the 'aye been'. God is immutable, so the church is immutable. But one question remains to be asked: has it always been like this? Has the church always commanded such a central position in the life of the Scottish nation? The answer is a short, simple: No! As Gordon Graham writes:

To begin with, for the thesis to hold good, the present parlous state must be residue of former glories. In other words, we can infer from the statistics that religious observance is in decline only if we have good evidence that the relevant statistics would have been much higher in the past. Most people assume that such evidence exists, but I doubt if this is so. (Graham, 1992, p.186)

Graham quotes Engel's description of religion amongst the English working classes of 1844, which confidently predicts further decline of the influence of religion. In fact, Graham, says "the picture now is in many respects very much like what it was then." (Graham, 1992, p.187) This is a conclusion which is shared by, amongst others, Robin Gill who holds that the problem is not that there are fewer people attending church now than there was a hundred years ago, but rather that there are more churches now than there were, and furthermore these

churches were never filled to begin with. The illusion is therefore that empty churches suggest that fewer people are attending, when it seems that on the whole the numbers attending have not dropped significantly.

What Scottish history does show is that there has never been one church which has truly monopolized the country. Between 1560 and 1690 the government of the Church of Scotland flip-flopped between Presbyterian and Episcopal government until it settled for a Presbyterian model in 1690. The puritanism and stress on moral law and hard work found in Presbyterianism supported and promoted industrialization, but there is evidence to suggest that these were not homogenous. The nineteenth century brought a large influx of Irish Catholics. A largely poor community of 'outsiders', the Roman Catholics tended to meet together for reasons of culture and ethnic identity. This is a situation which is still relevant today where membership is placed above attendance. Brown demonstrates that on the eve of agricultural and industrial revolution Scotland could in no way be described as religiously homogenous. Centuries of dissent and schism have produced a situation where the Presbyterian Church of Scotland has moved over from a position of near monopoly to one amongst a choice of several.

Another criticism of the secularization theory is its assumption that religion equals primitive, secular equals modern. This is a criticism of the Hegelian view of history and the inevitability of the decline of religion growing out of a society entering industrialization and modernity. Callum Brown, the social historian writes:

An issue which arises... is whether churchgoing was weakened by the growth of urban and industrial districts. It has commonly been observed, especially of England, that rates of church attendance seemed to diminish the larger a city, and especially an industrial city, became. But these maps [from the 1851 and 1984 censuses] give some cause for doubting this proposition as far as Scotland is concerned... An analysis of this data provides no statistically significant correlation between size of town and churchgoing rate; in other words church attendance was not lower for larger cities compared with smaller ones." (Brown, p.81)

and

"The evidence of the 1851 Religious Census ... casts great doubt upon urbanization as a monocausal explanation for the decline of churchgoing... what emerges [however] is a steeper downward trend in church attendance amongst the smaller towns compared to the larger towns." (Brown, p.83)

It appears then that many of those who argued for the inevitability of secularization did so partly out of a desire to see humanity evolve from its dependence on superstition. As Steve Bruce says, "Secular society would be society 'come of age'." (Bruce, p.8) This clearly has not happened.

A third criticism of the secularization theory which arises is the question of membership and attendance in gauging the religiosity of a nation. Brown writes:

Figures for membership and churchgoing reveal very little about belief - about its intensity or its content. Attendance at church does not mean someone is a devout Christian and non-attendance does not necessarily imply atheism or agnosticism. Non-churchgoing may well indicate exclusion or alienation from organized religion, or a combination of both, but it does not reveal unbelief. (Brown, pp.59-60)

Brown ascribes the explanation for declining attendance to lie with the question of membership. His figures show that between the 1850s and 1950s the percentage of presbyterian church members who attended Sunday worship fell from about 75% to 25%. It appears that maintaining a church connection became more important than actually attending worship on a Sunday. There is cause for supposing, he says, that at certain times church membership grew whilst attendance fell: it could be shown that during the fifteen years between 1876 and 1891 in the Church of Scotland membership increased by 23% while attendances dropped 30%. According to Brown the problems of membership numbers "go some way to revealing the origins of the presbyterian decline". (Brown, p.85) While membership was high and growing in the latter half of the nineteenth century, fluctuating between 1.9% and 1.0%, the annual growth rate dropped to a paltry 0.1% by the 1920s, partly the responsibility of the concurrent decline in population growth but more due to failing recruitment, and notably the Sunday school.

Statistics of religion thus point to the period between 1890 and 1914 as crucial to the changing social significance of religion. It is as well to note, however, that churchgoing and recruitment to the churches through Sunday schools are not the only measures of religious observance. Religion intrudes into people's lives in a variety of ways, most of which are not quantifiable. But there is at least one statistical series which demonstrates a much more vigorous religious element in Scottish civil life in the twentieth century. (Brown, p.86)

The figures for the religious solemnization of marriage, for example, show that this has is still regarded as important amongst Scots, partly due to the unavailability of civil weddings in a registrar's office in Scotland until 1939. This adds, in part to the indication that while changes in patterns of religious custom and adherence do vary at different times and at different rates they "do not altogether destroy the wider role of religion in people's lives". (Brown, p.87)

Brown goes on to report that

Church membership figures indicate a rapid downturn in growth after 1900 but not a spectacular breaching of religious adherence. Churchgoing may have fallen as many Protestant clergy maintained, but rather than swelling the number of the 'lapsed' the trend was towards a more lax definition of 'vital church connection'.... The intensity of members' connection with their churches was slackening whilst the number in connection actually continued to rise. The crisis at the turn of the century gravely affected the viability of many Protestant congregations and the role of religion in civil social policy, but the people did not desert the churches. (Brown, p.209)

To What Extent has church attendance in Scotland be affected by Secularization?

The importance of this question lies in our ability to link the statistics presented in *Prospects for Scotland 2000* with the wider picture of religiosity in Scotland. In other words, can the patterns and trends of membership and attendees of the institutional Christian churches in Scotland tell us anything about the general religiosity of the whole of the Scottish nation, both

the 14% who attended a church service on 30 October 1994 as well as the 86% who stayed away for one reason or another. In order to answer this with the *Prospects for Scotland 2000* data it would first need to be established whether there is a link between religious experience and religious practice.

The 1994 census provides figures for church attendance and membership. It does not offer a picture of the religiousness of the Scottish nation, rather it offers an approximate picture of the social place the church has in modern, post-industrial society. To say that it does offer an accurate snap-shot of the nation's religiousness would be to assume that there is an exclusive and direct connection between being 'religious' and going to a Christian church. This does not take in to account privatised religion - believing without belonging - or people's involvement in other religions or religious cults. When saying that 14% of the Scottish population went to church on a 'normal' Sunday you cannot automatically argue therefore that the remaining 86% of the population have no involvement in religion whatsoever. Taking the Church of Scotland as an example. On 30 October 1994 there were 218,930 adults worshipping with the Church of Scotland that day, while the church's national membership stands at 717,930. This means that 499,000 members of the church stayed away; nearly half a million members (69.5%) of the Church of Scotland found a reason for not attending church. There is therefore a problem with assessing the place of the church in society by relying on the figures for attendance and membership of Christian churches.

How can one explain the difference in numbers, between members and 'regular' attendees? If Scotland is becoming, or has become secularized I should expect there to be a decline in religious practice, religious membership and adherence to private religious practices, based on Bryan Wilson's definition¹ that secularization is the process through which religious thinking, practice, and institutions 'lose their social significance'. He provides 'statistical evidence of secularization' which measures 'the decline in organised religious participation' - interpreted as people voting with their feet and seeking alternative religious vehicles. In an article entitled "Some Reflections on the Parallel Decline of Religious Experience and Religious Practice" Sabino Acquaviva argues that "it can be demonstrated that religious experience is closely correlated with liturgy and with religious practice" (Acquaviva, 1993, p.47). He argues that

¹ quoted in *Introductory Sociology*, Macmillan Press, 1981.

people who are members of an organised religious structure or who have a religious faith are more likely than others to have a religious experience. And those who are generally religious (or better Christians) have more intense experiences than those who do not fall into any of the ... categories [of Denominational Christian and 'Christian']. This is true for Western Industrial societies". (Acquaviva, 1992, p.51)

His analysis shows that while religious experience is still fairly widespread in society, this has to be understood as a kind of invisible religion, i.e. it is not being practiced within the institutional churches; this has implications for the theory of secularization. Namely that there appears to be, rather than a decline in religious belief in society per se², a move away from a purely Christian belief (if indeed it could be proven that there was at one point a shared Christian belief in Scotland), what Robin Gill calls a 'dechristianization' rather than 'secularization'. Trevor Huddleston has commented recently, "We have moved from where Christianity is culture to where Christianity is choice." (Knock, Mission 21)

Conclusion

It is clear that the fall of churchgoing has afflicted some churches more than others... church attendance has been higher in districts with a strong Catholic population... Whilst the Catholic Church has not been immune to declining attendances, especially since the early 1970s, the decay of churchgoing in the twentieth century has been most pronounced amongst Protestants. (Brown, p.84)

While the Scottish Episcopal Church is decidedly more Catholic than Protestant it too has not been immune from decline, both in terms of attendance and membership. It seems that while membership of a church, maintaining at least a tentative link while not attending regularly, was seen as important in the past it is increasingly being regarded as less important now. Given the peculiar circumstances in which the Scottish Episcopal Church found itself during

² If by 'religious' we mean "an acceptance of a level of reality beyond the observable world known to science, to which are ascribed meanings and purposes completing and transcending those of the purely human realm." (Martin, 1978, p.12)

the decade 1980 to 1991 it appears now that the *Prospects for Scotland 2000* results were misleading when they suggested that the Episcopal Church was alone in standing up to the plight of secularization. Furthermore it can be seen that the theory of secularization is a flawed one which is too one-dimensional in its expectation of widespread decline in adherence to a religious understanding of the world. While there is a decline in adherence to formal religion it cannot be said that Scotland today is entirely secular.

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Marker's comment

A good essay, well nuanced though poorly referenced and one critical source used extensively but not referenced. This comes close to plagiarism but I will let it pass, as other references are included. It does however affect the unmoderated mark.

Revd. Dr. Michael Northcott
New College, Edinburgh 1998

Mark awarded: 58% (unmoderated)