The Global Quest for *Tranquillitas Ordinis*. Pacem in Terris, Fifty Years Later
Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Acta 18, 2013
www.pass.va/content/dam/scienzesociali/pdf/acta18/acta18-glendon.pdf

The Quest for Peace Fifty Years After *Pacem in Terris* – What Role For Religion?

Mary Ann Glendon

The world as we know it is always passing away
(1 *Corinthians* 7:31)

Peace is never attained once and for all,
but must be built up ceaselessly
(*Gaudium et Spes*, 78)

I. Path to peace or source of strife?

Simmering in the background as the Church prepares for the 50th anniversary of *Pacem in Terris* is a longstanding controversy over the role of religion in the quest for peace. A widely held opinion among intellectuals insists that religion is a major source of strife and intolerance in the world,[1] while those who propound a more nuanced view have found a vigorous defender in Pope Benedict XVI. The Pope not only disputes the notion that religion is necessarily "a source of discord or conflict"; he maintains that religious freedom is an important "path to peace".[2]

As we learned at last year's Plenary Session of this Academy, a growing body of empirical evidence confirms what common sense would suggest: that the political influence of religion is quite diverse: sometimes it contributes to strife, but often it fosters democracy, reconciliation, and peace.[3]

[1] See, e.g., Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007); Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: Norton, 2004).

[2] Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps*, 2011. See also, "Religious Freedom, The Path to Peace", *World Day of Peace Message*, 2011.

[3] Allen Hertzke, Religious Freedom in the World Today: Paradox and Promise, in *Universal Human Rights in a World of Diversity: The Case of Religious Freedom*, Mary Ann Glendon and Hans Zacher eds. (Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, 2012), 108, drawing on research by the Pew Forum; *see also* Gerard F. Powers, "Religion and Peacebuilding", in *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in a Violent World*, Daniel Philpott and Gerard Powers eds. (Oxford University Press, 2010).

As the authors of one recent study put it:

> Religion can be violent and repressive, the source of civil war, terrorism, and laws that oppress women and minorities. But the last four decades have shown religion also to be a destroyer of dictatorships, an architect of democracy, a facilitator of peace negotiations and reconciliation initiatives, a promoter of economic development and entrepreneurship, a partisan in the cause of women, and a warrior against disease and a defender of human rights.[4]

The interesting questions therefore become: How and under what circumstances does religion in its various manifestations foster peace and progress rather than strife and decline? What are the precise linkages between religion and the reduction or aggravation of conflict in diverse societies? How can religious actors help to shift probabilities towards "peace on earth"? Given that religion is one of the main forces that motivate and mobilize people, those questions are as urgent today as they were when Pope John XXIII was writing his historic encyclical.

As many participants in the 2012 Plenary Session emphasized, the *context* of those questions has changed drastically since *Pacem in Terris* addressed the threats to peace at the height of the Cold War in 1963. The much-desired end of that tense period was succeeded, not by the reign of peace, but by regional conflicts, civil wars, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the rise of terrorism by non-state actors, some of whom claim religious motives. In the half century since *Pacem in Terris,* the political context for peace-building has been altered not only by the demise of totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe, but by decolonization, new experiments in governance, and great migrations of peoples. The economic landscape has been transformed by globalization, increased interdependence, and growing economic disparities. The cultural landscape of the West has been reshaped by the revolution in manners and morals that took rise in the 1960s, and by an explosive growth in information and communications technology. Man's natural environment, too, is ceaselessly changing.

All of these developments are mutually conditioning, and along with major shifts in the religious landscape, described below, all have implications for the role of religion in the quest for peace.[5] *The world as we know it is always passing away…*

[4] Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott and Timothy Shah, *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (New York: Norton, 2011), 8.

[5] These social, economic and political developments have been major topics of study by this Academy. See especially, *Globalization: Ethical and Institutional Concerns*, 8th Plenary

II. The shifting religious landscape

Much of the disagreement over the relation between religion and violence stems from differing perceptions of reality – perceptions that inform people's understandings of "religion"; their opinions about the appropriate relation between religion and the polity; the ideas they hold and the stories they tell about human nature, reason, personhood, and government.

The image of religion as a fomenter of strife figures prominently in a grandiose historical narrative that took rise in the Enlightenment era against the background of the wars of religion that had wracked Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. According to this narrative, religion was expected to decline with the advance of science and education. The demise of religion was supposed to be accompanied by the diminution, if not disappearance, of all the ills that proponents of this story believed to be associated with religion – intolerance, violence, and the stifling of individual freedom.

By the time *Pacem in Terris* appeared in 1963, a belief in the inexorable advance of secularization had a strong hold on the mentalities of intellectuals and opinion leaders in the West, as well as among western-educated elites in other parts of the world. The well-known sociologist Peter Berger spoke for many when he told the *New York Times* in 1968 that "by the 21st century, religious believers are likely to be found only in small sects, huddled together to resist a worldwide secular culture".[6]

That prediction soon fell into the dustbin of discredited theories. The late 20th century saw a steady rise not only in the proportion of the world's population adhering to Christianity, Islam and Hinduism, but also in religion's influence on politics on every continent.[7] In 1998, Professor Berger retracted the forecast he had made thirty years earlier, saying: "The assumption that we live in a secularized world is false. The world today…is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever".[8] With commendable humility, he admitted: "That means that a whole body of literature by historians and social scientists…is essentially mistaken".

Session, 2001, E. Malinvaud and L. Sabourin eds.; *The Governance of Globalisation*, 9th Plenary Session, 2003, E. Malinvaud and L. Sabourin eds.; *Intergenerational Solidarity, Welfare, and Human Ecology*, 10th Plenary Session, 2004, M. Glendon ed.; *Democracy in Debate*, Hans F. Zacher ed. 2005; *Vanishing Youth: Solidarity with Children and Young People in an Age of Turbulence*, 12th Plenary Session, 2006, M. Glendon and Pierpaolo Donati eds.

[6] Quoted in Toft *et al.*, 1.

[7] Toft *et al.*, 2-3.

[8] Peter Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," in The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics, Peter Berger ed. (Washington, D.C.: Eerdmans, 1999), 2.

It would be just as mistaken, however, to suppose that the secularization narrative has lost its power merely because religion has failed to wither away on schedule. For one thing, cherished beliefs are not easily dislodged by facts. For another, the belief that religion is a prime source of conflict is deeply entrenched among the knowledge class.[9] Moreover, religious practice and the cultural context of religion have changed so greatly in recent years that we find ourselves, paradoxically, in a world where one group of respected analysts can claim with good reason that we are living in an age of "resurgent religion",[10] while others, with equal warrant, can describe our era as "a secular age".[11]

Those apparently contradictory characterizations are not so incompatible as they first appear. Those who say we are living in a "secular age" point mainly to developments in the West, especially the increases in non-believers, persons who say they are "spiritual but not religious", persons who say they are religious but unaffiliated with organized religions, and persons who describe themselves as belonging to a religion, but who adopt a selective approach to their church's teachings.[12]

The writers who maintain that we are living in a time of resurgent religion do not rest their case on a supposed rise in religious belief. Rather, they point to the increasing political influence of religion worldwide.[13] The authors of one recent study of that phenomenon emphasize that, "Religion is enjoying a political ascendancy fundamentally because religious actors enjoy a qualitatively greater level of independence from political authorities than they enjoyed in the past – indeed, greater than they typically enjoyed in virtually any previous era of human history. And they increasingly adhere to qualitatively different political theologies that legitimate if not demand intense political engagement".[14]

In sum, the contemporary spiritual landscape seems to be marked both by an upsurge in politically motivated religious activity, and by a trend on the part of believers, at least in the West, toward a more private, individualized religiosity at the expense of the formation and fellowship provided by

[9] For an analysis of the role that ideas about religious "divisiveness" have played in U.S. constitutional jurisprudence, see Richard W. Garnett, *Religion, Division, and the First Amendment*, 94 Georgetown L.J. 1667 (2006).

[10] Berger, supra n. 9; Toft *et al.*, supra n. 4.

[11] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[12] Taylor, 513.

[13] Toft *et al.*, supra n. 4; Berger, supra n.8.

[14] Toft *et al.*, 80-81.

organized religion. Accordingly, one might say of the secularization thesis what Mark Twain is supposed to have said when he learned that a newspaper had printed his obituary: "The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated".

But as the religious landscape has changed, so has the secularization thesis – as evidenced by several recent attempts to produce a new grand narrative of secularization.

III. Four narratives of secularism

A. The anti-religious secularism of the new atheists

The rise of militant Islam, together with the assertive political presence of religion in some liberal democracies, has spurred the production of a strident new secularist literature that is marked by intense hostility to religion. In a series of popular books, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris and the late Christopher Hitchens (often referred to collectively as the "new atheists") have resurrected and refurbished the oft-repeated arguments that science renders religion obsolete and that religion is a major source of strife.[15] The works of these writers are characterized by vigorous advocacy of atheism as a superior belief system, exasperation at the persistence of religious belief and influence, and a missionary zeal to sound the alarm about religion's negative effects in modern society.

Their main thesis is that science has discredited the existence of any sort of God or higher power. Challenging fellow scientists who have maintained that religion and science can co-exist,[16] Dawkins contends that the "God hypothesis" should be tested by the same standards as any other scientific proposition,[17] and claims that, by those standards, the existence of God is highly improbable.[18]

The new atheists also reject the live-and-let-live approach that many less militant non-believers have adopted toward religion. They claim that the

[15] Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007); Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: Norton, 2004); Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006); Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

[16] E.g., Stephen Jay Gould, "Nonoverlapping Magisteria", 106 *Natural History* 16 (March 1997).

[17] Dawkins, 82-85.

[18] Dawkins, 70.

supposed benefits of religion are no greater than the benefits of morality and ethics rooted in secularism, while the negative effects of religion are real and substantial. In Hitchens' best-selling book, *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, he maintained that organized religion is "the main source of hatred in the world….[v]iolent, irrational, intolerant, allied to racism, tribalism, and bigotry, invested in ignorance and hostile to free inquiry, contemptuous of women and coercive toward children".[19]

Dawkins acknowledges, as he must, that wars have many causes, but he assigns particular importance to "an unshakeable faith that one's own religion is the only true one, reinforced by a holy book that explicitly condemns all heretics and followers of rival religions to death, and explicitly promises that the soldiers of God will go straight to a martyrs' heaven".[20] Turning from Islam to the contemporary United States, he applies the epithet "American Taliban" to all persons who take religious teachings seriously. Their ideal society, he says, would entail: "a slavish adherence to a misunderstood old text; hatred of women, modernity, rival religions, science, and pleasure; love of punishment, bullying, narrow-minded, bossy interference in every aspect of life".[21]

Harris uncritically accepts the generalization that religion is a major source of strife, insisting that "intolerance is intrinsic to every creed".[22] He acknowledges the existence of religious persons who advocate tolerance, but dismisses them as persons who only seek to avoid "the personal and social costs that a full embrace of scripture imposes".[23]

With regard to the fact that much of the worst violence in recent times has been perpetrated by anti-religious regimes, Dawkins argues that the brutality of Hitler and Stalin was not attributable to their atheism, and suggests that Hitler may have taken advantage of the religious sentiments of the German people.[24]

It is worth noting that the current revival of old-line, hard-line secularism – or, as Pierre Manent calls it, "this pedantic atheism, this Puritanism of impiety" – is a phenomenon of the freedom-loving Christian West.[25] Yet, at

[19] Hitchens, 125.
[20] Dawkins, 316.
[21] Dawkins, 326.
[22] Harris, 13.
[23] Harris, 20-21.
[24] Dawkins, 309, 313-15.
[25] Pierre Manent, *Les charmes et les limites de la secularization*, Pierre d'Angle 14/2008, p. 29.

the same time there has appeared in the West another type of non-believer who views the advance of secularism – especially anti-Christian secularism – with alarm as a threat to the principal political achievements of modernity. Among these rueful atheists are some of the contemporary world's most respected scholars.

B. The revisionist secularism of the rueful non-believers

In recent years, prominent thinkers like Jürgen Habermas and the Italian philosopher-statesman Marcello Pera, who describe themselves as non-religious, have expressed grave concerns about the political and social costs of neglecting a cultural inheritance in which religion, liberty, and law are inextricably intertwined.[26] Doubting that liberal democracies can afford to be indifferent or hostile to religion, they have raised questions like: Where can a state based on the rule of law find citizens and statespersons capable of devising just laws and then abiding by them? What is the role of religion in supporting the commitment to common values – the minimal social cohesion – that every free society requires? Where can people learn to view others with respect and concern, rather than to regard them as objects, means, or obstacles?

For Habermas, one factor that led him to conclude that the West cannot abandon its religious inheritance without endangering the great social and political advances that are grounded in that heritage was concern about biological engineering and the instrumentalization of human life. Another factor was the erosion of "the kind of solidarity that the democratic state needs but cannot impose by law".[27] That erosion, he continued, could well lead to "the transformation of the citizens of peaceful and prosperous liberal societies into isolated monads acting on the basis of their own self-interest, persons who used their subjective rights only as weapons against each other". The liberal state, he maintains, "depends in the long run on mentalities that it cannot produce from its own resources".[28] A leading political leftist, he stunned many of his followers with his affirmation of the impor-

[26] Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2008); Jürgen Habermas, *Time of Transitions* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2006); Marcello Pera, *Why We Should Call Ourselves Christians: The Religious Roots of Free Societies* (New York: Encounter, 2011).

[27] Habermas, "Prepolitical Foundations of the Democratic Constitutional State?" in Habermas and Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 35.

[28] Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, 3.

tance of the Judaeo-Christian heritage:

> This legacy [the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love], substantially unchanged, has been the object of continual critical appropriation and reinterpretation. To this day, there is no alternative to it. And in light of the current challenges of a postnational constellation, we continue to draw on the substance of this heritage. Everything else is just idle postmodern talk.[29]

In a similar vein, Pera has written,

> Without the Christian vision of the human person, our political life is doomed to become the mere exercise of power and our science to divorce itself from moral wisdom; our technology to become indifferent to ethics and our material well-being blind to our exploitation of others and our environment.[30]

These regretful non-believers, with their rejection of secularist fundamentalism, have come substantially to share the view of Alexis de Tocqueville, who held that a free society is profoundly dependent on a healthy moral culture nourished by religion (by which he understood Christianity). In his introduction to *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville urged his fellow heirs of the French Enlightenment to lay aside their bias against religion. Lovers of liberty, he said, should "hasten to call religion to their aid, for they must know that the reign of freedom cannot be established without that of mores, nor mores founded without beliefs".[31] Religion, he insisted, is "the safeguard of mores; and mores are the guarantee of laws and the pledge" for the maintenance of freedom itself.[32]

Modern social science provides support for Tocqueville's intuitions concerning the relationship between active membership in a religion and civic virtue. It will be recalled that a highlight of the 2011 Plenary Session of this Academy was the report on path-breaking research that documents the manifold civic benefits of religious freedom.[33]

Four years of research by Robert Putnam and his colleagues has revealed further benefits: regular worshippers are more likely to donate money and voluntary service to charity (regardless of whether it is a religious charity), to give blood, to spend time with a person who is depressed, to return ex-

[29] Habermas, *Time of Transitions*, 151.

[30] Pera, *Why We Should Call Ourselves Christians*, 60.

[31] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 11.

[32] *Id.* at 44.

[33] Hertzke, supra n. 3.

cess change to a salesperson, to help a neighbor, to be active citizens and to belong to community organizations.[34]

C. The resigned secularism of Charles Taylor

Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, who describes himself as a theist, has argued in a massive 2007 book that, at least in the West, we now inhabit "a secular age", though not in the sense hoped for by the "new atheists".[35] In fact, Taylor predicts that the "secularization narrative which tends to blame our religious past for many of the woes of our world will become less plausible over time. This will happen in part because it will be clear that other societies are not following suit, and thus that this master narrative isn't about universal humanity; and also because many of the ills for which 'religion' was supposedly responsible aren't going away".[36]

Nevertheless, Taylor claims that we live in a secular age. He admits, as he must, that if one includes a wide range of spiritual beliefs in one's definition, religion is as present as ever.[37] But what makes this a secular age, in his view, is a "titanic change" in the social context in which religion is lived: public spaces in the liberal democracies have been largely emptied of religious references; there has been a decline in religious practice if not in belief; and (most significant in his view) people in many parts of the world have moved "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".[38]

It is that shift in religion's cultural context that for Taylor marks the arrival of an era which is "secular" in the sense that the lives of fewer people are influenced by religious beliefs, and "the eclipse of all goals beyond human flourishing becomes conceivable; or better, it falls within the range of an imaginable life for masses of people".[39] Five hundred years ago, he says, "non-belief in God was close to unthinkable for the vast majority; whereas today this is not at all the case".[40]

Taylor's generalization about belief in the past seems questionable in view of the struggles with doubt recorded in popular and religious literature

[34] Robert Putnam and David Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010).

[35] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[36] Taylor, 770.

[37] Id., 427 and 727.

[38] Taylor, 2-3, 12.

[39] Taylor, 14, 19-20, 430.

[40] Taylor, 556.

throughout the ages, including the Old and New Testaments. As Academician Pierre Manent has observed:

> The [secularization] thesis implies that we have gone from faith-based societies to secular ones just as we have gone from naïveté to self-reflection. But were they so naïve? And are we so canny? This idea of our forefathers having long been naturally Christian has come to appear to me as the greatest impediment to the understanding of European and Western history, and to our self-understanding…I wonder whether there are not more believers in present day France than at the time of Montaigne. The decisive, but perhaps the sole, difference was that most thoughtful people then considered that imposing religious conformity by political means was legitimate, and indeed the right thing to do, either on account of truth, or at least utility.[41]

Taylor is on firm ground, however, with his principal assertion: that religious believers in the West are no longer embedded in and sustained by a religion-saturated culture.[42] On this point, his work complements the analysis of religion and modernity presented to this Academy last year by Nicos Mouzelis. Professor Mouzelis outlined three aspects of modernity that have had a major impact on religious trends: increased geographical mobility with a corresponding decline in people's attachments to communities of memory and mutual aid; the increased separation among the various spheres of human activity (home, work, worship, education, recreation, and so on); and, last but not least, the rise of individualism.[43] Together, he said, those hallmarks of modernity have accelerated the spread of elite attitudes about religion from intellectuals, philosophers, and the educated classes to men and women in all walks of life. Noting the great growth of "non-churched religiosity" in Europe and the United States, Mouzelis concluded that, at least in the West, "the turn to an ultra-individualistic form of religiosity is here to stay". That conclusion is supported by recent surveys of religious attitudes and practices in Europe and the United States. Among the most striking trends are the rising proportion of people who say they are "spiri-

[41] Pierre Manent, *Les charmes et les limites de la secularization*, Pierre d'Angle 14/2008, p. 29. Taylor, at one point in his book, seems to have had second thoughts about the breadth of his generalization, admitting that even in an "age of faith", not everyone is equally devout (91).

[42] Taylor, 91, 147.

[43] *See* Nicos Mouzelis, Modernity: Religious Trends, in *Universal Human Rights in a World of Diversity: The Case of Religious Freedom*, Mary Ann Glendon and Hans Zacher eds. (Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, 2012), 71.

tual but not religious", and the increase of those who decline to affiliate with any organized religion.[44]

One should also mention in this context the "trickle-down" of certain attitudes from secular elites. As the political philosopher Allan Bloom pointed out a quarter century ago, a dumbed-down version of nihilism has become a part of popular education and insinuated itself into everyday life. Growing numbers of people, he observed, "pursue happiness in ways determined by that language, blissfully unaware of its implications".[45] It is, as he memorably put it, "nihilism without the abyss".

In Taylor's secularization narrative, the cultural revolution of the 1960s marked the key moment when the sense of a great variety of spiritual and moral options "which was originally that of elites only, spread through whole societies".[46] In the latter half of the 20th century, he writes, there arose "a generalized culture of 'authenticity', or expressive individualism, in which people are encouraged to find their own way, discover their own fulfillment, 'do their own thing'".[47] He describes the cultural upheaval of those years as "an individuating revolution" marked by "a new understanding of the good", according to which each person has his or her own way of realizing his or her humanity.[48]

Taylor attributes the spread of this new understanding to a variety of causes, including the spread of consumer life styles, social and geographic mobility, and what he euphemistically calls "new family patterns".[49] As the revolution in manners and morals progressed, its implications for religion unfolded. There emerged "a growing category of people who, while unable to accept orthodox Christianity, are seeking some alternative spiritual sources".[50]

[44] Eurobarometer Special Survey: Social values, science and technology (European Commission, June 2005), http://ec.Europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_225_report_en.pdf; and *Eurobarometer* 66: *Public Opinion in the European Union* (European Commission, June 2007); http://ec.Europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb66_en.pdf; *Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*, U.S. Religious Landscape Survey (2008). Robert Fuller, *Spiritual but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 2-4; Gallup Poll at http://www.gallup.com/poll/7759/americans-spiritual-searches-turn-inward.aspx (January 2002). See also, Mark Chaves, *American Religion: Current Trends* (Princeton University Press, 2011), 40-41.

[45] Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 155.

[46] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 94, 425, 436-37.

[47] Id., 299.

[48] Id., 475.

[49] Id., 473-474.

[50] Id., 302.

Getting more specific, Taylor observes that what spread through Western societies from artistic and elite circles was not merely a "new understanding of the good", but a new set of attitudes and practices in the area of sexual morality. It was in this period, he says, that "the limits on the pursuit of individual happiness have been most clearly set aside, particularly in sexual matters, but also in other domains".[51] He eventually brings himself to say that "the heart of this revolution lies in sexual mores," and that the pursuit of self-fulfillment, particularly in sexual matters, caused more and more people to fall away from churches that upheld rigorous standards of sexual morality.[52] "The generations which have been formed in the cultural revolution of the 1960s", he says, "are in some respects deeply alienated from a strong traditional model of Christian faith in the West".[53]

Never mentioning the human capacity for rationalization as a factor in the drift of many people toward forms of religion more compatible with their life-style choices, Taylor specifically declines to ascribe the sexual revolution to "an outbreak of hedonism and egoism".[54] Rather, he says that "this terribly fraught area in Western Christendom, where the sexual meets the spiritual, urgently awaits the discovery of new paths to God",[55] and he calls on the churches to take "another look at certain issues of sexual ethics".[56]

At the outset of his book, he had apologized for its length, saying that "To get straight to where we are, we have to go back and tell the story properly".[57] Yet, in an 874-page work packed with detail, he nowhere acknowledges the devastating consequences that the "individuating revolution" of the late 20th century has had for dependent individuals, especially for the women and children who now compose the bulk of the world's poverty population. The closest he comes to acknowledging the human costs of the sexual revolution is with a single sentence: "A lot of people discovered the hard way that there were dangers as well as liberation in throwing over the codes of their parents".[58]

Nor does Taylor seem to share the apprehensions of the melancholy non-believers regarding the corrosive effects on society as a whole that can

[51] Id., 485.
[52] Id., 485, 492.
[53] Id., 495.
[54] Id., 473-74.
[55] Id., 767.
[56] Id., 767.
[57] Id., 29.
[58] Id., 502.

result when large numbers of individuals decide to overthrow "the codes of their parents". He does note that religious formation has suffered.[59] But he does not seem to see that loss as a serious problem that needs to be addressed – a loss that leads to what the Catechism of the Catholic Church calls "indifferentism, a flight from the ultimate question of existence, and a sluggish moral conscience".[60] Taylor merely comments that "the fading contact of many with the traditional languages of faith seems to presage a declining future".[61] The overall mood of *A Secular Age* is one of resignation.

Quite different in this respect is the "positive secularism" of Pope Benedict XVI. Although the Pope shares Taylor's vivid sense of the magnitude of the changes that have secularized the "context of the world in which we Christians today have to live and bear witness to our faith",[62] his view of what those changes mean for Christianity is more in the mode of St. Paul's exhortation to the Romans (12:2): "Do not be conformed to the spirit of the age, but seek to be transformed by the renewal of your mind so that you may do what is good, pleasing and perfect in the sight of God". In January 2012, he described the "loss of the religious sense" as "the greatest challenge for today's Church".[63] And in a 2011 address to German Lutherans, calling all Christians to unite in confronting the challenges posed by a secular age, he said:

> Are we to yield to the pressure of secularization, and become modern by watering down the faith? Naturally faith today has to be thought out afresh, and above all lived afresh, so that it is suited to the present day. Yet it is not by watering the faith down, but by living it today in its fullness that we achieve this.[64]

D. The "positive secularism" of Benedict XVI

Given the negative connotations of the word "secularism" in several religious circles,[65] many Christians must have been surprised to see Pope

[59] Taylor, 533.

[60] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2128. See also the contribution to this Plenary Session by Kevin Ryan, "Catholic Education Fifty Years After *Pacem in Terris*", p. 355 of this book.

[61] Taylor, 533.

[62] Benedict XVI, *Speech to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany*, September 23, 2011.

[63] Benedict XVI, *Silence and the Word: Path of Evangelization*, January 12, 2012.

[64] Benedict XVI, *Speech to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany*.

[65] See Ian Benson, *Living Together with Disagreement: Pluralism, the Secular, and the Fair Treatment of Beliefs in Canada Today* (Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life, 2010).

Benedict emerge as a leading advocate for a concept of "positive secularism". The fact is, however, that the pontiff's bid to reinterpret and redirect the concept of secularism was long in the making. As Cardinal Ratzinger, he had already developed a contrast between "positive secularism" as a posture of neutrality that opens up areas of freedom for persons of all faiths, and "negative secularism" that "imposes itself through politics and leaves no public space for the Catholic and Christian vision, which thus risks becoming something purely private and essentially mutilated".[66]

As Pope Benedict XVI, he has actively promoted his vision of "positive secularism". In 2008, speaking to French politicians in the very cradle of anti-religious secularism, he said:

> At this moment in history when cultures continue to cross paths more frequently, I am firmly convinced that a new reflection on the meaning and importance of *'laïcité'* is now necessary. In fact, it is fundamental, on the one hand to insist on the distinction between the political realm and that of religion in order to preserve both the religious freedom of citizens and the responsibility of the state towards them; and, on the other hand, to become more aware of the irreplaceable role of religion for the formation of consciences and the contribution which it can bring to, among other things the creation of a basic ethical consensus within society.[67]

French President Nicolas Sarkozy showed his receptiveness to the concept on the same day, saying: "It would be crazy to deprive ourselves of religion; quite simply, a failing against culture and against thought. For this reason I am calling for a positive secularity (*laïcité*)….A positive secularity offers our consciences the possibility of dialogue, above and beyond our beliefs and rites, concerning the meaning we want to give to our lives...".[68]

Earlier that year, en route to Washington, D.C., the Pope used the example of the United States to illustrate his point that secularism need not be anti-religious. He told journalists on the plane that he was "fascinated" by the fact that the U.S. "began with a positive concept of secularism".[69] The American Founders, he observed, had "intentionally created a secular state" – not out of hostility toward religion, but quite the contrary – out of

[66] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, interview reported in http://www.chiesa.espressonline.it/dettaglio.jsp?id+20037&eng=y

[67] Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to French Politicians*, September 12, 2008.

[68] Sarkozy, *Declaration on the place of religion in France and on his concept of positive secularity*, September 12, 2008, http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/087002825.html

[69] Benedict XVI, *Interview with journalists*, April 15, 2008.

respect for it and because they understood that religion can be lived authentically only under conditions of freedom. He drew a sharp contrast with the "negative" European form of secularism, noting that the branch of the Enlightenment that was essentially anti-clerical and irreligious had so little influence in early America, that American secularism was devised to protect religion and churches from government, not to protect government from religion and churches.

Later in his trip he referred to the United States as an example of a secular state where many religions not only co-exist in relative harmony, but have actually flourished.[70] At the same time, however, he took the occasion to warn the American bishops of the need to protect the American model from movements that are currently trying to reduce role of religion in public life.[71] And in 2011, greeting the new ambassador from Brazil, the country with the world's largest Catholic population, the Pope called again for a "healthy secularism" that does not treat religion as a mere private sentiment but accords it appropriate public recognition.[72]

In a number of ways, the thinking of Pope Benedict on the subject of secularism converges with that of non-believers like Habermas and Pera. All three, notably, share a deep concern about the erosion of Europe's cultural heritage. That was likely a factor in Cardinal Ratzinger's decision to engage in a public dialogue with Habermas in 2004 and to co-author a book with Pera in 2006.[73] As early as 1968, in his *Introduction to Christianity*, Ratzinger had adopted a novel approach to open-minded non-believers, suggesting that they could meet on the common ground of doubt:

> Just as the believer is choked by the salt water of doubt constantly washed into his mouth by the ocean of uncertainty, so the non-believer is troubled by doubts about his unbelief, about the real totality of the world which he has made up his mind to explain as a self-

[70] Benedict XVI, *Address to U.S. Bishops*, April 16, 2008.

[71] Upon his return to Italy, the Pope again held up the American example of "healthy secularism", describing the United States as a society "where the religious dimension, with the diversity of its expressions, is not only tolerated but appreciated as the nation's 'soul' and as a fundamental guarantee of human rights and duties". Benedict XVI, *General Audience*, 30 April 2008.

[72] Benedict XVI, *Address to Brazilian Ambassador to the Holy See*, November 2, 2011.

[73] Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2005); Joseph Ratzinger and Marcello Pera, *Without Roots: The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam* (New York: Basic Books, 2006). As Pope Benedict, he contributed the preface to Pera's *Why We Should Call Ourselves Christians: The Religious Roots of Free Societies* (New York: Encounter, 2011).

> contained whole….[B]oth the believer and the unbeliever share, each in his own way, doubt *and* belief, if they do not hide away from themselves and from the truth of their being….Perhaps in precisely this way doubt, which saves both sides from being shut up in their own worlds, could become the avenue of communication. It prevents both from enjoying complete self-satisfaction; it opens up the believer to the doubter and the doubter to the believer; for one it is his share in the fate of the unbeliever, for the other the form in which belief remains nevertheless a challenge to him.[74]

Pope Benedict returned to that theme and connected it to the quest for peace at the 25th anniversary of the Day of Prayer for Peace held in Assisi in October 2011. There, he explained why he had deliberately invited to that meeting "people to whom the gift of faith has not been given, but who nevertheless are on the lookout for truth, searching for God". Describing such persons as "pilgrims of truth, pilgrims of peace", he said they "take away from militant atheists the false certainty by which these claim to know that there is no God and they invite them to leave polemics aside and to become seekers who do not give up hope in the existence of truth and in the possibility and necessity of living by it. But they also challenge the followers of religions not to consider God as their own property, as if he belonged to them, in such a way that they feel vindicated in using force against others".[75]

Each of the four foregoing narratives of secularism represents an effort to come to terms with the fact that "the world as we know it is always passing away". The current age is not secular enough for the old-line atheists who persist in seeing religion as the root of nearly all evils, while it has become too secular for the melancholy non-believers who fear the foundations of liberal democracy are being eroded. For theists like Charles Taylor and Pope Benedict, recent changes in the religious landscape pose new challenges for religion, but the Pope, interestingly, is closer to the melancholy non-believers in his perception that changes in the religious landscape also pose challenges to peace – by eroding social cohesion, the great acquisitions of Western culture (human rights, the dignity of the person, the rule of law), and the sense of one human family for which all bear common responsibility.

[74] Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, J.R. Foster trans. (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 20-21.

[75] Benedict XVI, *Speech at Assisi*, October 27, 2011.

IV. Religion and the quest for peace in a secular age

How will the changes that are currently taking place in the cultural context of religion affect religion's role in the quest for peace? Those who claim religion can be a powerful force for peace, freedom and justice like to cite as examples the role of religious actors in the non-violent revolutions that brought down totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe; the human rights movement in Latin America; the struggle against apartheid in South Africa; and the downfall of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines.[76] They point out as well that the men responsible for the bloodiest conflicts of the 20th century – Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, and Mao Zedong – were not only non-religious but actively hostile to religion.

Those who claim that religion is a major source of strife and violence, for their part, prefer to dwell on wars of religion in times past, and the present-day rise of jihadist Islam. But evidence is accumulating that the religious rhetoric associated with such conflicts often has more to do with issues of individual and group identity than with theological differences.[77] A Uppsala University study of conflicts occurring between 1989 and 2003 has found that religion was rarely a primary or exclusive factor in conflicts where it was implicated.[78] As Jacques Maritain observed long ago, "[N]othing is easier for human weakness than to merge religion with prejudices of race, family, or class, collective hatreds, passions of a clan and political phantoms which compensate for the rigors of individual discipline in a pious but insufficiently purified soul".[79]

The disputes over religion's role among the many sources of conflict may never be completely resolved, but it is encouraging that there is now abundant support for the proposition that, under the right conditions, religion can be a major resource for peace-building. In the half-century since *Pacem in Terris*, religious actors have demonstrated their effectiveness as peace-builders in numerous ways – sometimes through observation and witness; sometimes through education; sometimes through advocacy; and

[76] Gerard F. Powers, "Religion and Peacebuilding", in *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in a Violent World*, Daniel Philpott and Gerard Powers eds. (Oxford University Press, 2010), 317, 318.

[77] Malise Ruthven, Fundamentalist and other Obstacles to Religious Toleration in *Universal Human Rights in a World of Diversity: The Case of Religious Freedom*, Mary Ann Glendon ed. (Vatican City: Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, 2011), 456.

[78] The study is reported in Isak Svenson, "Fighting with Faith: Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars", 51 *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 932 (2007).

[79] Jacques Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy* (forthcoming Ignatius Press, 2012), 39.

sometimes through conciliation and mediation.[80] As former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright once pointed out, faith-based organizations "have more resources, more skilled personnel, a longer attention span, more experience, more dedication, and more success in fostering reconciliation than any government".[81]

Moreover, knowledge is accumulating about what conditions enable religion to play a positive role in the quest for peace, and what conditions tend toward the opposite effect. Last year, for example, the Academy learned of research indicating that violence tends to be greater in societies where religious practice is suppressed,[82] and that promotion of religious freedom advances the cause of peace by reducing inter-religious conflict.[83]

According to the 2011 study of the rise of politically assertive religion by Toft, Philpott and Shah, two factors are especially important in explaining whether the kind of politics a religious group pursues will be violent or peaceful, democratic or authoritarian: (1) "the set of ideas that a religious community holds about political authority and justice – whether its doctrines call for religious freedom and human rights" and (2) "the relationship between religious authorities and political authorities – e.g. the degree of independence they enjoy from political authority".[84] These authors conclude that, "religious actors are most successful [in peace-building] when they are independent of the state – and in the case of peace mediation, of opposition forces as well – and espouse a political theology of peace or reconciliation".[85]

Gerard Powers, the director of a center for international peace studies at Notre Dame University, agrees that religion-state relationships can have a major impact on whether religion is a source of conflict or peace. He cites evidence that both atheist states and state religions are more problematic for peace-building than systems where church and state are separate – or systems where the state gives preference to one religion but does not restrict minority

[80] David Steele, "An Introductory Overview of Faith-Based Peacebuilding", in *Pursuing Just Peace*, Rogers, Barnat and Ideh eds. (Baltimore, Md.: Catholic Relief Services, 2008), 22-32.

[81] *The Mighty and the Almighty: Reflections on America, God and World Affairs* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), 77.

[82] Brian Grim and Roger Finke, *The Price of Freedom Denied: Religious Persecution and Conflict in the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[83] Thomas Farr, *World of Faith and Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[84] Toft *et al.*, 9-10.

[85] Toft *et al.*, 205.

religions.[86] Regarding the conditions that favor a peace-building role for religion, Powers emphasizes the importance of each religion's internal resources:

> Religious leaders become effective peacebuilders only when they are able to rise above …ethical and pastoral parochialism, while not abandoning the religious inculturation that can make them such a force for peace in the local context. Most (if not all) religious traditions contain within them rich resources for overcoming parochialism and fostering a more universal vision. Concepts of transcendence, charity, justice, reconciliation, and human dignity are consistent with and reinforce the pluralist goal of engendering unity while respecting diversity.[87]

If the conclusions of these scholars are valid, they do not augur well for the peace-building potential of the "new atheism" or of the new "humanism" that Professor Manent has described as prevalent in Europe. For the fact is that these new belief systems have not proved friendly to religious freedom, nor have they shown much ability to rise above their own parochialism and intolerance.

Pope Benedict, for his part, has emphasized the need for each religion to examine its own tradition in order to find resources for peacebuilding.[88] As Cardinal Ratzinger, he sympathetically compared the challenge currently faced by Islam to Christianity's long struggle to come to terms with the Enlightenment:

> [T]he Muslim world today finds itself facing an extremely urgent task that is very similar to the one that was imposed upon Christians beginning in the age of the Enlightenment, and that Vatican Council II, through long and painstaking effort, resolved concretely for the Catholic Church….[I]t is necessary to welcome the real achievements of Enlightenment thinking – human rights, and especially the freedom of faith and its exercise, recognizing these as elements that also are essential for the authenticity of religion. As in the Christian community, where there has been a long search to find the correct position of faith in relation to such beliefs – a search that will certainly never be concluded once and for all –, so also the Islamic world with its own tradition faces the immense task of finding the appropriate solutions in this regard.[89]

[86] Powers, *Religion and Peacebuilding*, 334.
[87] Powers, 332.
[88] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, lecture at Subiaco, April 1, 2005.
[89] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Curia*, December 2006.

Today, one might well apply that same recommendation to the new "humanist" dogmas that fancy themselves the heirs of the Enlightenment! For they seem to grasped the wrong end of the stick – carrying forward its legacy of religious prejudice while ignoring its opening to human rights and religious freedom.

V. *Pacem in Terris* and the Quest for Peace

Given the enormous changes that have taken place on the religious and political landscape since 1963, one might well ask what if anything *Pacem in Terris* has to add to contemporary discussions of the role of religion in the quest for peace. As Archbishop Minnerath and Professor Hittinger have pointed out, Pope John XXIII had remarkably little to say directly about great questions of war and peace. His encyclical was, rather, a call to all men and women of good will to reflect upon those questions in the light of certain principles, taking account of the signs of the times. That call would soon be amplified by the Fathers of Vatican II, and by succeeding Church leaders who have insisted with increasing urgency that the task of bringing Christian principles to life belongs primarily to the laity at every level and in every sphere of society. The encyclical's level of generality was very much in keeping with the tradition that when the Church speaks on social issues, her aim is not to propose specific solutions, but "to help form consciences in political life and to stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act [in accordance with justice] even when this might involve conflicts with situations of personal interest". [90]

The principles to which Pope John XXIII appealed in 1963 were not particularly new, but he lifted them up in a way that awakened hope in many weary hearts. Partly that was due to the encyclical's unusually accessible language and partly to the prophetic spirit and fatherly persona of "Good Pope John" himself. The extraordinary reception given to *Pacem in Terris* in 1963 prompted Archbishop Minnerath to observe that we also "need prophets to help us discern the crimson thread of salvation history that runs through human history".

Though much has changed in the past fifty years, the fundamental challenges for men and women who wish to be peace-builders remain much the same: to accurately discern the signs of the times and to perceive how time-tested principles can be brought to life in new situations. This Acad-

[90] *Deus Caritas Est*, 28a; see also, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 2423; *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,* par. 7.

emy has now concluded the second of three meetings devoted to those tasks with the aid of social scientists and social actors from every region of the world. But where, one wonders, shall we find the peace-builders or prophets we need in our increasingly secularized societies?

Perhaps there is a clue for us in what the dying Socrates said to his grieving friends when they asked, "Where shall we find a good singer of incantations now that you are abandoning us?" "Greece is a vast land", Socrates replied, "and there are many good people in it, and many good people among foreign races as well. You ought to search among yourselves, too, for perhaps you would hardly find others better able to do this than you".[91]

Something similar, I believe, is the message of the silences in *Pacem in Terris* – a message addressed to all persons of good will, including social scientists.

[91] Plato, *Phaedo*, 78a.