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1. Introduction

A concern with the prerequisites for and consequences of mass educational development has been a recurrent theme in both the history and historiography of those societies where knowledge and skills based on literacy were regarded as preconditions for power and economic growth. Systematic comparative study of this interplay has been devoted in large measure to educational correlates of nation-building and economic growth since 1950.[1] Economic historians and others have drawn renewed attention to a similar range of phenomena in the preindustrial West and Japan.[2]

Partial explanations for the differential timing and tempo of mass as opposed to elite literacy diffusion in preindustrial settings have been constructed from variations in the content and articulation of role, ritual, and belief systems within and between the major world religions. Thus, Western religions of The Book have, in principle, been more conducive to mass literacy than Eastern religions of The Way. Egalitarian organization combined with inner-worldly life orientations produced a literate laity well before reading skills were required by new technologies or an expanding electorate.[3] Where less egalitarian modes of religious role organization prevailed, as in the state churches of Germany and Scandinavia, popular education was promoted, initially, by laicized or lay-oriented varieties of Lutheran pietism in tension with Orthodox clericalism as part of absolutist styles of administration.

Once initiated in these more authoritarian systems, religious literacy exposed the lower and middle strata of the laity to a range of hitherto less accessible symbolic resources which provided one of the preconditions for (1) altered definitions of religiosity, (2) the progressive laicization of religious life, and (3) incipient secularization.

Social-historical analyses of this interplay between educational development and religious change based on broadly representative evidence describing one or more dimensions of the two sets of variables directly involved are, to my knowledge, nonexistent. Given the relationship between historical visibility of a stratum and its location in any system of power and privilege, it is hardly surprising that generalizations regarding this relationship are most

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persuasive at elite levels. That is to say, as we move from higher to lower levels of educational experience, from elite to more popular styles of religiosity, the scope and depth of our evidence is reduced. Norway provides one example of a very small number of nation-state with a rather long history of central statistical record-keeping, not only of a general demographic nature but also extensive data relevant to these phenomena at a popular level.

It is my objective in this book to explore some procedural and substantive problems encountered in the study of mass educational development and popular religious change in Norwegian society between 1740 and 1891. This effort seeks to be of some value in clarifying the comparative study of that broad class of social-historical phenomena in other preindustrial contexts.

Let us begin with a series of statements designed to link this research focus to a more general set of conceptual/analytic perspectives.[4] First, by "social-change analysis" I refer to the comparative study of classes of social-historical phenomena ranging in levels of abstraction from the interpersonal act to world systems. This descriptive activity seeks to formulate and/or test propositions or systems of logically related propositions which hope to predict and/or explain whatever class of phenomena is under consideration. Such an effort requires a system of more or less explicit interrelated concepts which organize the descriptive process, whether comparative or not. I have found the following conceptual scheme helpful as adapted from the work of Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *Character and Social Structure*, incorporating some elements from Peter Berger's *The Sacred Canopy*, and extending both by including my rather primitive version of Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory. All of these I find congruent with my own symbolic interactionist and structural orientation.

By the "interpersonal act" I refer to a system of symbols composing a norm which limits and defines a particular unit of other-oriented conduct. By their recurrence, these acts stand out as regularities and constitute the *social role* level of description as in Merton's role sets and tasks. My descriptive focus is largely at this level, so much so that I considered entitling this book, "Pastors, preachers, pupils, and teachers within a preindustrial society." These roles are enacted within *institutional* settings: that is, "organizations of roles one or more of which is an authority role." Once again, we will be tracing shifting distributions of authority within and between parishes, dioceses, and school districts, as well as patterns of authority within lay movements from local to regional to national levels of institutionalization. Historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and others, whatever their several differences may be, tend to share a classification of institutions according to their objective functions or ends, whether untended or inintended, into a minimum of four major clusters:

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political, economic, religious, and kinship. These clusters I will refer to as "institutional orders," which vary over time in terms of their internal diversity as well as the mode and degree of *interplay* between those more or less diverse institutions classified within the order. A major reason for selecting the Norwegian case was precisely the relatively high level of homogeneity within its religious order even into the twentieth century, in contrast to the much-studied, long-term pluralism of the United States, Britain, Holland, Belgium, and other western European religious orders which have constituted almost but not quite totally the empirical base for "theory construction" in the sociology of religious change during the past fifty years or so.

Until the explicit, very self-conscious appearance of world-systems theory, the most abstract unit of comparative descriptive study and theory formation was the nation-state, political economy, society, or, in the vocabulary to which I have grown accustomed, "social structure." The present book was prepared as part of a long-term interest in viewing Norway as a system of interrelated institutional orders with varying modes and degrees of integration from tenth-century paganism to the immensely greater range of symbolic resources and orientations of twentieth-century life within an effective world system of vast ideological variations. General reflections about the existence of a world system regarded as a system of interrelated social structures with varying modes and degrees of interdependence from one historical situation to another is hardly a product of the last twenty years. However, the self-conscious, explicit conceptual refinements and theoretical disputations generated by this perspective linked to systematic empirical evidence are usually regarded as of rather recent vintage.[5] Except for the efforts of Robert Wuthnow, I am not aware of any concerted attempt to re-examine the social history of religions within this framework.[6] Any history of the religious order in Norwegian social structure from paganism to socialism could hardly ignore Norway's obvious "dependence" on external sources of symbolic input at every major point of internal religious transformation, from the alleged eleventh-century conversion to the vagaries of twentieth-century multi-dimensional symbolic worlds with sacred elements persisting in an allegedly secular world. I will return to my use of the word "alleged" below, as related to some long-term controversies concerning the concept of secularization.

The transmission of religious heritages from generation to generation through a continuing process of socialization has usually been regarded as a human universal. By definition, this process occurs at the interpersonal level via those social actions, "formal and informal," whereby symbols and skills are transmitted to those who do not already possess them and are continually

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reinforced and/or modified through a life-long dialectic in which our social worlds are thought to be constructed, sustained, and transformed.[7] Given the fact that, even as I write, current sociologists of education, whether of religious symbol systems or otherwise, with their access to immediately observable data, remain understandably cautious regarding bland certainties about the outcome of these actions, and the limitations of historical sociologists hardly deserve explicit reference.

It is precisely for this reason, acknowledged or otherwise, that social historians have tended to locate their most micro-level descriptions at the role level of abstraction. In this sense virtually all social-historical description is based on a tissue of assumptions and inferences informed, implicitly or explicitly, by an analytic/descriptive strategy.

Granted these very general considerations and caveats, let us return somewhat closer to the task at hand, after a deliberately brief consideration of how I will be using the words "religion," "religious order," and "secularization" insofar as this is not self-evident in the main body of my exposition. The current chaotic state of so-called secularization theory[8] prompts me to adopt a "Humpty-Dumpty" approach to these problems of definition: that is, to paraphrase, "when I use these words this is what I will mean by them, neither more nor less." First, to those readers with functionalist preferences I offer the following modification of Lenski's version of Durkheim.[9] By "religion" I refer to any system of beliefs about the nature of the force or forces which ultimately shape the destiny of man, and the ritual system associated therewith shared by the members of a role system. This formulation, which is intended to have highly generalized relevance, contains structural elements with functionalist presuppositions. Since it is my view that definitions are useful or not useful (rather than true or false) in a particular research context, I prefer for present purposes a culturally limited structural definition in line with my general conceptual scheme outlined above. That is, a "religious order" is composed of those institutions within which people worship God or Gods, usually at regular times and at fixed places.[10] The many specific religious orders which have existed, coexisted, or do exist within particular social structures in time and space are empirically distinguishable on two major interrelated dimensions: (a) in the context and articulation of their three major components, i.e., their belief, ritual, and role systems, and (b) in their relationship with consequences for other institutional orders within their social structures. Finally, by "secularization" in this conceptual language I will be referring to the decline and even "disappearance" of a historically specific religious order as an independent and/or contingent variable in social conduct, process, and change.

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It would seem to follow from this limited structural definition that the alleged displacement of Norwegian paganism by a certain variety of Medieval Catholicism (i.e., Cluniac) was in turn reformed out of existence by a series of distinguishable Lutheran belief systems which are now said to be fading away into who knows how many varieties of implicit, invisible, civil, or other public and/or private belief systems, each of which phenomena may be regarded as an example of religious change (in general) and secularization in particular. Well, why not? It seems to me that much of the controversy over this concept – insofar as it has an empirical reference and has not simply been defined out of existence by some functionalist (motto: "Old religions never die, they differentiate") – derives from the almost total preoccupation with pluralistic societies after about 1945.

There is one critical point coming from functionalist quarters which I find relevant and challenging. That is the charge that the entire concept of secularization is anchored in an historical myth about an Age of Faith, whether Catholic (i.e., thirteenth century) or Protestant (*c.* 1525–?). My use of the words "alleged" and "allegedly" derive from this charge. After all, given the problems distinguished scholars like Robert Bellah and David Martin seem to have with the twentieth century, how can we talk persuasively about any period before the advent of George Gallup? If then? Given sufficiently rigorous empirical requirements we simply cannot do so.

I have rejected such criteria and have attempted to show how we might construct some broadly representative, indirect indicators of past religiosity without relying on pious anecdotes about historically visible personalities or those intoxicating intellectual–historical generalizations about Thomas Aquinas or Martin Luther as though the former's *Summa* or the latter's *Table Talk* demonstrates something about the religious experience of Portuguese peasants or Norwegian farmers. Whether I have made some modest progress in this direction must be left to the reader's judgment.

Leaving these unresolved controversies behind, let us return to the main line of the argument: namely, the social mechanisms whereby religious beliefs, rituals, and role were and are transmitted from one generation to another. The content, social organization, and outcome of this process, usually differentiated along lines of social stratification, are obviously highly variable both historically and across cultural systems. Among these variations is the extent to which knowledge of the belief system and ritual prerogatives is more or less monopolized by a body of specialists, in principle or in practice. Historically, definitions of what constitutes "true religiosity" within a given tradition have tended to be controlled by these specialists. Where knowledge of a sacred literature has been included among these criteria of religiosity,

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pressures toward some variety of popular literacy production have existed at least as a potential development. If this has issued in the rote memorization of a sacred text in a language other than the vernacular, it may be argued that both educational development, in the sense of functional literacy, and religious change have been more effectively inhibited.

One of the several distinctive and highly consequential outcomes of the Protestant Reformation derived precisely from the promotion of religious objectives via mass functional literacy in languages closer to, though by no means identical with, the vernacular(s). The creation of national languages out of regional dialects was at least partly the product of this religiously inspired educational process.

Protestantism, perhaps more than any other world religion, has been associated with two interrelated varieties of religious change: diversification and secularization. By the former term I refer to three major classes of phenomena. First, the proliferation of theologically distinct perspectives within a given religious order which may or may not take the form of a church "party" and are dominated by variable portions of the established clergy. Church of England Evangelicals, Apostolicals, and Latitudinarians as well as Orthodox, Pietist, and Rationalist varieties of German and Scandinavian Lutheranism represent historically discernible cases in point.[11]

Secondly, the laicization of religious initiative often associated with rising levels of doctrinal literacy and sensitivity has issued in a concomitant decline in clerical control over definitions of religiosity and altered role relationships within the established order. This class of phenomena has become historically visible in a variety of forms ranging from clerically guided lay activism to incipient sectarian movements which are ultimately reabsorbed in the established order through a process of more or less mutual cooptation.[12]

Finally, sectarian splits from the traditional system constitute the most clear-cut, dramatic, and studied of all forms of diversification by historical sociologists of religious change.[13] The other two are usually relegated to part of the generating context and seldom serve as the focus of systematic empirical description and explanatory concern.

The three varieties of diversification, including the sectarian, occur within a given social historical-religious tradition as broadly conceived. The concept of secularization, as I have indicated above, has been applied to a wide range of structural and symbolic phenomena which are thought to weaken and/or displace traditional religious conceptions, whether established, laicized, or sectarian.[14]

These forms of religious expression and change were conditioned by differential educational experiences. Among the more familiar empirical

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generalizations regarding these relationships are the following. First, it is almost tautological to observe that both the differentiation of clerical theologies and the secularization of upper-strata life orientations have been linked to changes within higher educational settings. For example, Norwegian church historians have attributed the sequence of five distinguishable clerical "generations" in the state church parishes between 1740 and 1891 to corresponding changes in theological formulations at the university training centers at Copenhagen and, after 1811, at Oslo. These in turn derived partially from reorientations in Lutheran theology at German universities. Access to more secular varieties of the continental and English Enlightenment was largely restricted to urban merchants in international trade and higher officials in the state bureaucracy, whose more extensive travel and varied educational experiences enhanced receptivity to such divergent ideas as part of their life style as a status group.

Historical and cross-national variations in the relationship between the social organization and content of mass literacy production and the diversification of popular religiosity have included two rather obvious general types. The religious pluralism of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England and America was partially reflected in and reinforced by a fragmented range of educational agencies and opportunities. Norway, on the other hand, represents one case of those societies where initial religious uniformity was reflected in and reinforced by a highly integrated system of common school education.

As considerations of national identity and economic growth began to supplement religious objectives in the shaping of educational policy, particularly after 1814, corresponding changes occurred in the organization and content of mass educational experience. Given the differential starting points in pluralistic as opposed to unified systems, it seems reasonable to anticipate that the style and impact of such changes would vary accordingly. The following exploration in historical role analysis is intended as a contribution to the comparative study of this process by focusing attention where possible upon some regional contrasts in these two sets of interacting variables, primarily in rural Norwegian society between about 1740 and 1891.

The rationale underlying historical role analysis as a procedural alternative for the description and interpretation of religious change (e.g., diversification, secularization) may be summarized as follows.[15] The most commonly utilized indicators of religiosity are based upon selected aspects of belief or ritual systems. A third possibility relates to the role system dimension of religious orders. This system is the most immediate interpersonal context of ritual acts and beliefs of any religion. Sociologically, one can certainly argue, beliefs and

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rituals have no consequential significance unless they are institutionalized in role systems.

Assuming, then, that these three dimensions are interdependent, we may infer that a direct indicator of change in the role system may also be taken as an indirect indicator of change in one or both of the other two as well. Next, it is asserted that in all such systems, from the varieties of shamanism to styles of hierarchical priestly systems, there is a differential distribution of ritual skills and/or belief-system knowledge. Thus, while it is often asserted that Sunni, unlike Shiite, Islam is a religion without a laity since it lacks a priesthood, no scholar argues that Koranic knowledge is uniformly distributed throughout any population, as witness the Allamah, the Kadi, and other role labels in the world of Sunni Islam. Any religious order, then, can be described in terms of the role content of its "clergies" and laities. Further, as we will see in the Norwegian case, change in this system may occur in role tasks, sets, and/or power and prestige, reciprocally or independently. Finally, indicators of religious change, whether diversification or secularization, can be constructed in terms of specified kinds of transformations in that system.

Perhaps the most fundamental indicator for which data are often available to the historical sociologist is the ratio of laymen to clergymen. This ratio, depending on the problem at hand, may be taken as an indirect indicator of religiosity, as in studies of secularization or as providing quantitative evidence for one of several predisposing and/or inhibiting conditions for other types of religious diversification as well.

The internal or face validity of this ratio is based on the following refinements on the discussion thus far. (1) Where control over and knowledge of ritual skills and beliefs is restricted (*de jure* or *de facto*) to specialists, the ratio of lay population to such religious functionaries becomes one major factor in the maintenance of the traditional system. If such specialists decline in number relative to the laity for whom they are responsible, it follows that the frequency of clergy–laity contacts must also decline and the effective influence of the belief and ritual systems for which they are the prime carriers must also be weakened. (2) Logically, the validity of this ratio as an indicator of secularization varies directly with the extent to which a clergy monopolizes belief-system knowledge and ritual skills. This is, of course, an empirical variable cross-culturally and, as in the Norwegian case, historically. Thus, in Roman Catholicism where this monopoly is (or was), in principle, very high, relative to Islam, Judaism, or Protestant groups with congregational polities, this ratio would constitute a more valid indicator than it would for these other systems. (3) Finally, insofar as the allocation of land, labor, and capital among alternatives may be taken to reflect value preferences within a human society,

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the laity/clergy ratio provides a useful indicator of relative standing in a value hierarchy. Thus, an increase in the number of laymen per clergyman in the same society over time could be interpreted as reflecting a decline in the value standing of the religious tradition for which that clergy is a carrier.

This ratio is, of course, only one aspect of historical role analysis which will be brought to bear upon a systematic description and interpretation of the interplay between state church pastors, parish school teachers, lay preachers, pupils, and parents between about 1740 and 1891. Most of our attention will be upon the religious consequences of educational role system continuities, contradictions, and changes with particular reference to belief system and organizational diversification. The process of secularization will constitute a minor though recurrent theme in chapters 2 through 5 and then will be brought into focus as a major summarizing device in the final chapter.

Chapter 2 encompasses the one-hundred-year time-span up to about 1840 during which the role system in Norway within which elemental reading skills were transmitted to the rural laity remained almost unchanged. Parish school teachers were part of the infrastructure of the religious order. They served as ancillary personnel facilitating, above all, one role task of the clergy: preparation of children for Confirmation. Essentially the same textbook was used for that purpose throughout the entire period. While it is axiomatic that a "constant" cannot explain a variable, my major objective will be to show how cumulative contradictions within this system contributed both to a fundamental cleavage in popular definitions of religiosity and the incipient laicization of spiritual initiative.

Economically, the close of this period (*c.* 1840) predates Norway's industrial take-off point by about sixty years.[16] Moreover, the shift from a subsistence to a money economy began to accelerate in rural areas, most notably after 1850. Thus, while regional variations in economic organization, productivity, and growth during the preceding century were not static and provided differential preconditions for both common school development and potential religious innovation, their persuasive power as explanatory variables requires at least some qualification.

Political sources of change would seem more immediate and demonstrable. Given an established territorial church with a monopoly control of parish-level educational development wherein the clergy constituted an integral part of the official ruling strata (*embettsstand*), such an assertion is more than plausible. The most dramatic change in the context of this religio-educational system occurred when Norway regained significant control over her internal affairs with the forced transfer of ultimate political authority from Denmark

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to Sweden in 1814[17] as a part of a Great Power European settlement at the close of the Napoleonic Wars. This included a shift in the locus of many religious and educational policy decisions from an absolutist setting in Copenhagen to Oslo, where a potential for more popular initiative in these affairs derived from the Constitution of that year. These possibilities were realized most significantly during the 1840s when a series of political and religious "events" altered the conditions of clergy/laity relationships in several consequential ways which became more visible historically after 1850.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 encompass a period in Norwegian societal development (1840–1891) during which traditional life expectations were being disrupted at an unprecedented level. The population, which had grown from 723,618 to 1,328,471 between 1769 and 1845 (85%), increased to 2,000,917 (93%) between 1845 and 1891. Internal migration, while only partly revealed by the relative growth of urban populations, accelerated rapidly after 1845. The percentage of urban residents in the population, which had grown by only 3.3% (8.9 to 12.2%) between 1769 and 1845, had increased another 11% (12.2 to 23.7%) by 1891. Concurrently, Norway, which ranked second only to Ireland as a nation of emigrants during the nineteenth century, experienced the departure of some 418,000 persons between 1845 and 1891, in contrast to only 6,200 during the previous decade, 1836–1845. These demographic trends both reflected and conditioned underlying transformations in the Norwegian political economy. The economy, while still largely preindustrial, had been undergoing a rapid though regionally variable monetization of its exchange system as the primary sector (forestry, fishing, agriculture, mining) was increasingly rationalized and oriented toward domestic and foreign markets. Politically, the *embettsstand* (official strata), which included the clergy, lost their centuries-old control over the state apparatus after a sustained period (*c.* 1869 to 1884) of partisan mobilization and conflict with an ascendant bourgeois Left. This issued in their subordination to a parliamentary majority after 1884.[18] We will return to these controversies in chapter 6.

Chapter 3 contains an effort to delimit the magnitude and regional distribution of organized lay activism within Norway's total population. This preliminary attempt to construct a broadly representative picture of popular religiosity is based, primarily, upon a quantitative, longitudinal analysis of lay mobilization within The Norwegian Inner-Mission Society between 1868 and 1894. Two other organized forms of religious expression for which some quantitative evidence is available – dissenter groups and foreign mission societies – are examined in order to refine the range of diversity as well as to estimate more fully the actual magnitude of popular religious activism.

Chapter 4 is focused upon elite educational experience and styles of