

Is Secularization on the Reverse Gear?

David Martin

Annual Discern Lecture

13th October 2009

Professor David Martin is Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics (1962-1989); and a prolific contributor to public as well as sociological debate about religion. The author of more than 20 books, he has established creative lines of thinking both within the sociology of religion and at the interface between sociology and theology.

Amongst post-modern societies' members, the element which prevails is the knowledge power rather than the muscle power. Dominant features within these societies are capitalism, post-industrialization, urbanization, rationalization, science, technology and secularization. Collectively these characteristics pose amplified challenges to all societies' relationships and institutions, not less to the power of the church. David Martin's straightforward definition to secularization is "whatever goes wrong with religion, including for example, the introduction of laws permitting abortion and euthanasia".

That the shift from religion to secularization is a linear one is a common incorrect assumption according to David Martin. He explained that this supposition is contradicted by a number of empirical correlations and observations. When analysing secularization, David Martin has taken a wider view than most sociologists by looking at the changing role of religion in a range of societies. His study illustrates contrasting

patterns of religious practices in various advanced industrial societies. Also, he revealed marked differences within a number of single societies. The particular location, history, culture, ethnicity, external influences, social classes and political systems of an area, contribute in different ways and to varying degrees, to its level of secularization. From his studies, David Martin maintained that some niches in society are capable of protecting their own identity more than others. He argues that in modern societies the role of religion is determined by particular factors, such as: the level of religious pluralism and the dominant religion; the political system and the correlation between the church and the state; and the degree to which religion aids in the provision of nationalism, regionalism and/or ethnic identity. David Martin concluded that the various processes grouped together under the secularization's heading, are not necessarily linked, since along the years this term has assumed a broad meaning.

Bejn il-membri ta' socjetajiet post-moderni, l-element li jiddomina huwa s-setgħa ta' l-gharfien iktar milli l-poter li tagħti s-sahha fizika. Fatturi dominanti f'dawn is-socjetajiet huma l-kapitalizmu, il-post-industrijalizazzjoni, l-urbanizzazzjoni, ir-razzjonalizmu, ix-xjenza, it-teknologija u s-sekularizzazzjoni. Kollektivament dawn il-karatteristici jikkonstitwixxu għal sfidi kbar, kemm għall-relazzjonijiet, kif ukoll għall-istess istituzzjonijiet ta' dawn is-socjetajiet, mhux l-inqas l-influwenza tal-knisja. David Martin jagħti definizzjoni sempliċi għas-sekularizzazzjoni, jgħidli, "dak kollu li jista' jolqot hazin lir-religjon, inkluż perezempju l-introduzzjoni ta' ligijiet li jippermettu l-abort u l-ewtanazja".

Li c-caqliqa mir-religjon għas-sekularizzazzjoni hija wahda dritta, hija assunzjoni inkorretta skont David Martin. Huwa jishaq li din is-suppożizzjoni hija immeriha minn numru ta' korrelazzjonijiet u osservazzjonijiet empirici. Fl-analizi tiegħu fuq is-sekularizzazzjoni, David Martin ha wahda milli iktar perspettivi wisa' li s-socjologi qatt kienu hadu. Huwa haress lejha

diversi socjetajiet u studja l-bidliet fl-irwoli li assumiet ir-religjon. L-istudju tiegħu wera li hemm xejriet kontrastanti fil-prattici religjużi f'socjetajiet avvanzati industrijalment. Barra minhekk, huwa sab differenzi interessanti f'numru ta' socjetajiet individwali. Il-lokazzjoni, l-istorja, il-kultura, l-etnicita', l-influwenzi esterni, is-sistema tal-klassijiet soċjali u dik politika, kollha jikkontribwixxu b'modi differenti u b'livelli varji għall-process tas-sekularizzazzjoni. Mill-istudji tiegħu David Martin sab li niccew partikolari fis-socjeta` huwa aktar kapaci jiprotegħu l-identita` tagħhom minn oħrajn. Huwa jargumenta li f'socjetajiet moderni, l-irwol tar-religjon huwa determinat minn fatturi partikolari bħal: livell tal-pluralizmu religjuż u r-religjon dominanti; is-sistema politika u l-korrelazzjoni bejn il-knisja u l-istat; kif ukoll il-livell ta' kemm religjon tghin biex jinkiseb nazzjonalizmu, religjozita` u/jew identita` etnika. David Martin ikkonkluda li l-processi varji li huwa imlaqqa' taht it-terminu sekularizzazzjoni mhumiex necessarjament marbuta flimkien, dan għaliex skont hu matul iż-żmien dan it-terminu kiseb tifsira wiesa.