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Sociology of religion

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Chapter – 1

Introduction

Sociology of religion is the study of the beliefs, practices and organizational forms of religion using the tools and methods of the discipline of sociology. This objective investigation may include the use of both quantitative methods (surveys, polls, demographic and census analysis) and qualitative approaches such as participant observation, interviewing, and analysis of archival, historical and documentary materials.

Modern academic sociology began with the analysis of religion in Émile Durkheim's 1897 study of suicide rates among Catholic and Protestant populations, a foundational work of social research which served to distinguish sociology from other disciplines, such as psychology. The works of Karl Marx and Max Weber emphasized the relationship between religion and the economic or social structure of society. Contemporary debates have centered on issues such as secularization, civil religion, and the cohesiveness of religion in the context of globalization and multiculturalism. The contemporary sociology of religion may also encompass the sociology of irreligion (for instance, in the analysis of secular humanist belief systems).

Sociology of religion is distinguished from the philosophy of religion in that it does not set out to assess the validity of religious beliefs. The process of comparing multiple conflicting dogmas may require what Peter L. Berger has described as inherent "methodological atheism". Whereas the sociology of religion broadly differs from theology in assuming indifference to the supernatural, theorists tend to acknowledge socio-cultural reification of religious practice.

Classical, seminal sociological theorists of the late 19th and early 20th century such as Durkheim, Weber, and Marx were greatly interested in religion and its effects on society. Like those of Plato and Aristotle from ancient Greece, and Enlightenment philosophers from the 17th through 19th centuries, the ideas posited by these sociologists continue to be examined today. More recent prominent sociologists of religion include Peter L. Berger, Robert N. Bellah, Thomas Luckmann, Rodney Stark, William Sims Bainbridge, Robert Wuthnow, Christian Smith, and Bryan R. Wilson.

View of religion in classical sociology

Durkheim, Marx, and Weber had very complex and developed theories about the nature and effects of religion. Of these, Durkheim and Weber are often more difficult to understand, especially in light of the lack of context and examples in their primary texts. Religion was considered to be an extremely important social variable in the work of all three.

Karl Marx

"Marx was the product of the Enlightenment, embracing its call to replace faith by reason and religion by science." Despite his later influence, Karl Marx did not view his work as an ethical or ideological response to nineteenth-century capitalism (as most later commentators have). His efforts were, in his mind, based solely on what can be called applied science. Marx saw himself as doing morally neutral sociology and economic theory for the sake of human development. As Christiano states, "Marx did not believe in science for science's sake...he believed that he was also advancing a theory that would...be a useful tool... effecting a revolutionary upheaval of the capitalist system in favor of socialism." As such, the crux of his arguments was that humans are best guided by reason. Religion, Marx held, was a significant hindrance to reason, inherently masking the truth and misleading followers. As we will later see, Marx viewed social alienation as the heart of social inequality. The antithesis to this alienation is freedom. Thus, to propagate freedom means to present individuals with the truth and give them a choice to accept or deny it. In this, "Marx never suggested that religion ought to be prohibited."

Central to Marx's theories was the oppressive economic situation in which he dwelt. With the rise of European industrialism, Marx and his colleague Friedrich Engels witnessed and responded to the growth of what he called "surplus value." Marx's view of capitalism saw rich capitalists getting richer and their workers getting poorer (the gap, the exploitation, was the "surplus value"). Not only were workers getting exploited, but in the process they were being further detached from the products they helped create. By simply selling their work for wages, "workers simultaneously lose connection with the object of labor and become objects themselves. Workers are devalued to the level of a commodity – a thing..." (Ibid 125) From this objectification comes alienation. The common worker is led to believe that he or she is a replaceable tool, and is alienated to the point of extreme discontent. Here, in Marx's eyes,

religion enters. Capitalism utilizes our tendency towards religion as a tool or ideological state apparatus to justify this alienation. Christianity teaches that those who gather up riches and power in this life will almost certainly not be rewarded in the next ("it is harder for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven than it is for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle...") while those who suffer oppression and poverty in this life, while cultivating their spiritual wealth, will be rewarded in the Kingdom of God. Thus Marx's famous line - "religion is the opium of the people", as it soothes them and dulls their senses to the pain of oppression.

Émile Durkheim

Émile Durkheim placed himself in the positivist tradition, meaning that he thought of his study of society as dispassionate and scientific. He was deeply interested in the problem of what held complex modern societies together. Religion, he argued, was an expression of social cohesion.

In the fieldwork that led to his famous *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim, a secular Frenchman, looked at anthropological data of Indigenous Australians. His underlying interest was to understand the basic forms of religious life for all societies. In *Elementary Forms*, Durkheim argues that the totems the Aborigines venerate are actually expressions of their own conceptions of society itself. This is true not only for the Aborigines, he argues, but for all societies.

Religion, for Durkheim, is not "imaginary," although he does deprive it of what many believers find essential. Religion is very real; it is an expression of society itself, and indeed, there is no society that does not have religion. We perceive as individuals a force greater than ourselves, which is our social life, and give that perception a supernatural face. We then express ourselves religiously in groups, which for Durkheim makes the symbolic power greater. Religion is an expression of our collective consciousness, which is the fusion of all of our individual consciousnesses, which then creates a reality of its own.

It follows, then, that less complex societies, such as the Australian Aborigines, have less complex religious systems, involving totems associated with particular clans. The more complex a particular society, the more complex the religious system is. As societies come in contact with other societies, there is a tendency for religious systems to emphasize universalism to a greater and greater extent. However, as the division of labor makes the individual seem more important

(a subject that Durkheim treats extensively in his famous *Division of Labor in Society*), religious systems increasingly focus on individual salvation and conscience.

Durkheim's definition of religion, from *Elementary Forms*, is as follows: "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them." (Marx, introduction) This is a functional definition of religion, meaning that it explains what religion does in social life: essentially, it unites societies. Durkheim defined religion as a clear distinction between the sacred and the profane, in effect this can be paralleled with the distinction between God and humans.

This definition also does not stipulate what exactly may be considered sacred. Thus later sociologists of religion (notably Robert Bellah) have extended Durkheimian insights to talk about notions of civil religion, or the religion of a state. American civil religion, for example, might be said to have its own set of sacred "things": the Flag of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., etc. Other sociologists have taken Durkheim's concept of what religion is in the direction of the religion of professional sports, the military, or of rock music.

Max Weber

Max Weber published four major texts on religion in a context of economic sociology and his rationalization thesis: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism* (1915), *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism* (1915), and *Ancient Judaism* (1920).

In his sociology, Weber uses the German term "Verstehen" to describe his method of interpretation of the intention and context of human action. Weber is not a positivist – in the sense that he does not believe we can find out "facts" in sociology that can be causally linked. Although he believes some generalized statements about social life can be made, he is not interested in hard positivist claims, but instead in linkages and sequences, in historical narratives and particular cases.

Weber argues for making sense of religious action on its own terms. A religious group or individual is influenced by all kinds of things, he says, but if they claim to be acting in the name

of religion, we should attempt to understand their perspective on religious grounds first. Weber gives religion credit for shaping a person's image of the world, and this image of the world can affect their view of their interests, and ultimately how they decide to take action.

For Weber, religion is best understood as it responds to the human need for theodicy and soteriology. Human beings are troubled, he says, with the question of theodicy – the question of how the extraordinary power of a divine god may be reconciled with the imperfection of the world that he has created and rules over. People need to know, for example, why there is undeserved good fortune and suffering in the world. Religion offers people soteriological answers, or answers that provide opportunities for salvation – relief from suffering, and reassuring meaning. The pursuit of salvation, like the pursuit of wealth, becomes a part of human motivation.

Because religion helps to define motivation, Weber believed that religion (and specifically Calvinism) actually helped to give rise to modern capitalism, as he asserted in his most famous and controversial work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

In *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber argues that capitalism arose in Europe in part because of how the belief in predestination was interpreted by everyday English Puritans. Puritan theology was based on the Calvinist notion that not everyone would be saved; there was only a specific number of the elect who would avoid damnation, and this was based sheerly on God's predetermined will and not on any action you could perform in this life. Official doctrine held that one could not ever really know whether one was among the elect.

Practically, Weber noted, this was difficult psychologically: people were (understandably) anxious to know whether they would be eternally damned or not. Thus Puritan leaders began assuring members that if they began doing well financially in their businesses, this would be one unofficial sign they had God's approval and were among the saved – but only if they used the fruits of their labor well. This along with the rationalism implied by monotheism led to the development of rational bookkeeping and the calculated pursuit of financial success beyond what one needed simply to live – and this is the "spirit of capitalism." Over time, the habits associated with the spirit of capitalism lost their religious significance, and rational pursuit of profit became its own aim.

The Protestant Ethic thesis has been much critiqued, refined, and disputed, but is still a lively source of theoretical debate in sociology of religion. Weber also did considerable work in world religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism.

In his magnum opus *Economy and Society* Weber distinguished three ideal types of religious attitudes:

1. world-flying mysticism
2. world-rejecting asceticism
3. inner-worldly asceticism

He also separated magic as pre-religious activity.

Symbolic anthropology and phenomenology

Symbolic anthropology and some versions of phenomenology argue that all humans require reassurance that the world is safe and ordered place - that is, they have a need for ontological security. Therefore, all societies have forms of knowledge that perform this psychological task. The inability of science to offer psychological and emotional comfort explains the presence and influence of non-scientific knowledge in human lives, even in rational world.

Functionalism

Unlike Symbolic anthropology and phenomenology, functionalism points to the benefits for social organization which non-scientific belief systems provide and which scientific knowledge fails to deliver. Belief systems are seen as encouraging social order and social stability in ways that rationally based knowledge cannot. From this perspective, the existence of non-rational accounts of reality can be explained by the benefits they offer to society.

Chapter - 2

Rationalism

Rationalists object to the phenomenological and functionalist approaches, arguing that they fail to understand why believers in systems of non-scientific knowledge do think they tell the truth and that their ideas are right, even though science has shown them to be wrong. We cannot explain forms of knowledge in terms of the beneficial psychological or societal effects that an outside observer may see them as producing. We have to look at the point of view of those who believe in them. People do not believe in God, practice magic, or think that witches cause misfortune because they think they are providing themselves with psychological reassurance, or to achieve greater cohesion for their social groups. They do so because they think their beliefs are correct - that they tell them the truth about the way the world is.

Nineteenth-century rationalist writers, reflecting the evolutionist spirits of their times, tended to explain the lack of rationality and the dominance of false beliefs in pre-modern worlds in terms of the deficient mental equipment of their inhabitants. Such people were seen as possessing pre-logical, or non-rational, mentality. Twentieth-century rationalist thinking generally rejected such a view, reasoning that pre-modern people didn't possess inferior minds, but lacked the social and cultural conditions needed to promote rationalism. Rationalists see the history of modern societies as the rise of scientific knowledge and the subsequent decline of non-rational belief. Some of these beliefs - magic, witchcraft - had disappeared, while others - such as religion - had become marginalized. This rationalist perspective has led to secularization theories of various kinds.

Typology of religious groups

One common typology among sociologists, religious groups are classified as ecclesias, denominations, sects, or cults (now more commonly referred to in scholarship as New Religious Movements). Note that sociologists give these words precise definitions which differ from how they are commonly used. In particular, sociologists use the words 'cult' and 'sect' without negative connotations, even though the popular use of these words is often pejorative.

Research

In prosperous democracies, higher rates of belief in and worship of a creator correlate with higher rates of homicide, juvenile and early adult mortality, STD infection rates, teen pregnancy, and abortion. As the author Stephen Law paraphrases in his book *War For the Children's Mind*, "The most theistic prosperous democracy, the U.S., is exceptional, but not in the manner Franklin predicted. The United States is almost always the most dysfunctional of the developed democracies, sometimes spectacularly so...The view of the U.S. as a "shining city on the hill" to the rest of the world is falsified when it comes to basic measures of societal health."

The study also notes that it is the more secular, pro-evolution societies that come close to "cultures of life". The authors conclude that the reasonable success of non-religious democracies like Japan, France and Scandinavia has refuted the idea that godless societies suffer disaster. They add "Contradicting these conclusions requires demonstrating a positive link between theism and societal conditions in the first world with a similarly large body of data - a doubtful possibility in view of the observable trends."

BBC news reported on a study that attempted to use mathematical modelling ('nonlinear dynamics') to predict future religious orientations of populations. The study suggests that religion is headed towards 'extinction' in various nations where it has been on the decline: Australia, Austria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Switzerland. The model considers, not only the changing number of people with certain beliefs, but also attempts to assign utility values of a belief as per each nation.

Secularization and civil religion

In relation to the processes of rationalization associated with the development of modernity, it was predicted in the works of many classical sociologists that religion would decline. Despite the claims of many classical theorists and sociologists immediately after World War II, many contemporary theorists have critiqued secularisation thesis, arguing that religion has continued to play a vital role in the lives of individuals worldwide. In the United States, in particular, church attendance has remained relatively stable in the past 40 years. In Africa, the emergence of Christianity has occurred at a high rate. While Africa could claim roughly 10 million Christians in 1900, recent estimates put that number closer to 200 million. The rise of Islam as a major world religion, especially its new-found influence in the West, is another significant

development. Furthermore, arguments may be presented regarding the concept of civil religion and new world belief systems. In short, presupposed secularization as a decline in religiosity might seem to be a myth, depending on its definition and the definition of its scope. For instance, some sociologists have argued that steady church attendance and personal religious belief may coexist with a decline in the influence of religious authorities on social or political issues. Additionally, the regular attendance or affiliation do not necessarily translate into a behavior according to their doctrinal teachings. In other words, there might be still a growing in numbers of members but it does not mean that all members are faithfully following the rules of pious behaviors expected. In that sense, religion may be seen as declining because its waning ability to influence behavior.

Bryan Wilson

Wilson is a writer on secularization who is alarmed about the nature of life in a society dominated by scientific knowledge. His work is in the tradition of Max Weber, who saw modern societies as places in which rationality dominates life and thought. Weber saw rationality as concerned with identifying causes and working out technical efficiency, with a focus on how things work and with calculating how they can be made to work more effectively, rather than why they are as they are. According to Weber, such rational worlds are disenchanting. Existential questions about the mysteries of human existence, about who we are and why we are here, have become less and less significant.

Wilson insists that non-scientific systems - and religious ones in particular - have experienced an irreversible decline in influence. He has engaged in a long debate with those who dispute the secularization thesis, some of which argue that the traditional religions, such as church-centered ones, have become displaced by an abundance of non-traditional ones, such as cults and sects of various kinds. Others argue that religion has become an individual, rather than a collective, organized affair. Still others suggest that functional alternatives to traditional religion, such as nationalism and patriotism, have emerged to promote social solidarity. Wilson does accept the presence of a large variety of non-scientific forms of meaning and knowledge, but he argues that this is actually evidence of the decline of religion. The increase in the number and diversity of such systems is proof of the removal of religion from the central structural location that it occupied in pre-modern times

Ernest Gellner

Unlike Wilson and Weber, Gellner (1974) acknowledges that there are drawbacks to living in a world whose main form of knowledge is confined to facts we can do nothing about and that provide us with no guidelines on how to live and how to organize ourselves. In this regard, we are worse off than pre-modern people, whose knowledge, while incorrect, at least provided them with prescriptions for living. However, Gellner insists that these disadvantages are far outweighed by the huge technological advances modern societies have experienced as a result of the application of scientific knowledge.

Gellner doesn't claim that non-scientific knowledge is in the process of dying out. For example, he accepts that religions in various forms continue to attract adherents. He also acknowledges that other forms of belief and meaning, such as those provided by art, music, literature, popular culture (a specifically modern phenomenon), drug taking, political protest, and so on are important for many people. Nevertheless, he rejects the relativist interpretation of this situation - that in modernity, scientific knowledge is just one of many accounts of existence, all of which have equal validity. This is because, for Gellner, such alternatives to science are profoundly insignificant since they are technically impotent, as opposed to science. He sees that modern preoccupations with meaning and being as self-indulgence that is only possible because scientific knowledge has enabled our world to advance so far. Unlike those in pre-modern times, whose overriding priority is to get hold of scientific knowledge in order to begin to develop, we can afford to sit back in the luxury of our well-appointed world and ponder upon such questions because we can take for granted the kind of world science has constructed for us.

Michel Foucault

Foucault was a post-structuralist who saw human existence as being dependent on forms of knowledge - discourses- that work like languages. Languages/discourses define reality for us. In order to think at all, we are obliged to use these definitions. The knowledge we have about the world is provided for us by the languages and discourses we encounter in the times and places in which we live our lives. Thus, who we are, what we know to be true, and what we think are discursively constructed.

Foucault defined history as the rise and fall of discourses. Social change is about changes in prevailing forms of knowledge. The job of the historian is to chart these changes and identify the reasons for them. Unlike rationalists, however, Foucault saw no element of progress in this process. To Foucault, what is distinctive about modernity is the emergence of discourses concerned with the control and regulation of the body. According to Foucault, the rise of body-centered discourses necessarily involved a process of secularization. Pre-modern discourses were dominated by religion, where things were defined as good and evil, and social life was centered around these concepts. With the emergence of modern urban societies, scientific discourses took over, and medical science was a crucial element of this new knowledge. Modern life became increasingly subject to medical control - the medical gaze, as Foucault called it.

The rise to power of science, and of medicine in particular, coincided with a progressive reduction of the power of religious forms of knowledge. For example, normality and deviance became more of a matter of health and illness than of good and evil, and the physician took over from the priest the role of defining, promoting, and healing deviance.

Globalization

The sociology of religion continues to grow throughout the world as different cultures take on different types of religion. The two main theories of globalization are modernization development, which is a functionalist derivative, and exploitation which is a Marxist derivative. Both of these theories came from the idea that prejudices were holding back the advancement of religion. The main difference between these theories is whether they view capitalism as a friend or foe. As technology advanced many different cultures started to look into different religions and incorporate different beliefs into society.

Robert N. Bellah

or an originally combative opponent may be persuaded to offer signs of submission. Such ritual behaviors help to make possible these inherently difficult transactions. The “reproductive problem” to which Deacon suggests symbolism was the solution, however, required more than assuring a present response; it required assurance of future actions – it required promises. At the point where efficient adaptation to the environment made cross-gender pair bonding necessary,

with its division of labor between the provision of meat and care of infants, the stability of what was now necessarily “marriage” required more than nonsymbolic ritual.

Sexual or mating displays are incapable of referring to what might be, or should be. This information can only be given expression symbolically. The pair-bonding in the human lineage is essentially a promise, or rather a set of promises that must be made public. These not only determine what behaviors are probable in the future, but more important, they implicitly determine which future behaviors are allowed and not allowed; that is, which are defined as cheating and may result in retaliation.

Another advantage of symbolic ritual as against purely nonhuman animal ritual is that it gives rise not to ad hoc relationships, but to a whole system of relationships: Ritualized support is also essential to ensure that all members of the group understand the newly established contract and will behave accordingly. As in peacemaking, demonstrating that these relationships exist and providing some way of marking them for future reference so that they can be invoked and enforced demand the explicit presentation of supportive indices, not just from reproductive partners but from all significant kin and group members.

Marriage and puberty rituals serve this function in most human societies. The symbol construction that occurs in these ceremonies is not just a matter of demonstrating certain symbolic relationships, but actually involves the use of individuals and actions as symbol tokens. Social roles are redefined and individuals are explicitly assigned to them. A wife, a husband, a warrior, a father-in-law, an elder – all are symbolic roles, not reproductive roles, and as such are defined with respect to a complete system of alternative or complementary symbolic roles. Unlike social status in other species, which is a more-or-less relationship in potential flux, symbolic status is categorical. As with all symbolic relationships, social roles are defined in the context of a logically complete system of potential transformations; and because of this, all members of a social group (as well as any potential others from the outside) are assigned an implicit symbolic relationship when any one member changes status.

And Deacon points out that, over the last million years, although language undoubtedly developed toward more self-sufficient vocal symbol systems, whose very power was the degree to which they could become context-free, nonetheless, “symbols are still extensively tied to

ritual-like cultural practices and paraphernalia. Though speech is capable of conveying many forms of information independent of any objective supports, in practice there are often extensive physical and social contextual supports that affect what is communicated”.

Deacon’s argument runs remarkably parallel to that of Goffman, Collins, and of course Durkheim. The point is that symbolism (including centrally language), social solidarity based on a moral order, and individual motivation to conform, all depend on ritual. But Deacon, as we have seen has indicated that the very first emergence of symbolism “may not have been very much like speech.”

Chapter - 3

The Ritual Roots of Society and Culture

There is reason to believe that full linguisticity, language as, with all its diversity, all known human cultures have had it, is relatively recent, perhaps no older than the species *Homo Sapiens*, that is 120,000 years old (Nichols 1998). But symbol using hominids have been around for at least a million years. Can we say anything about what kind of proto-language such hominids might have used? Perhaps we can in a way that will further illuminate the nature of ritual.

Ritual And The Origin Of Music

While in the last decade or two a number of valuable books concerned with the origins of language have been published, it was not until the year 2000 that an important volume entitled *The Origins of Music* (Wallin, Merker, and Brown) appeared. A number of articles in this edited volume begin to indicate what the “ritual” that Deacon suggests provided the context for the origin of language might have been like: Namely, it involved music. The ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl, in discussing features of music found in all cultures, writes: “It is important to consider also certain universals that do not involve musical sound or style. I mentioned the importance of music in ritual, and, as it were, in addressing the supernatural. This seems to me to be truly a universal, shared by all known societies, however different the sound” (2000: 468). He draws from this the conclusion that the “earliest human music was somehow associated with ritual”. But “music” in most cultures involves more than what can simply be heard, as our current usage of the word implies. As Walter Freeman (2000: 412) puts it, “Music involves not just the auditory system but the somato sensory and motor systems as well, reflecting its strong associations with dance, the rhythmic tapping, stepping, clapping, and chanting that accompany and indeed produce music.” And Ellen Dissanayake (2000: 397) writes, “I suggest that in their origins, movement and music were inseparable, as they are today in pre modern societies and in children.

I consider it essential that we incorporate movement (or kinesics) with song as integral to our thinking about the evolutionary origin of music.” While the contributors to *The Origins of Music* are not of one mind about the social function of music that gave it its evolutionary value, several

of them emphasize the role of music in the creation of social solidarity. As Freeman (2000: 420) puts it, “Here [in music] in its purest form is a human technology for crossing the solipsistic gulf. It is wordless [not necessarily, R.B.] illogical, deeply emotional, and selfless in its actualization of transient and then lasting harmony between individuals.

It constructs the sense of trust and predictability in each member of the community on which social interactions are based.” Dissanayake (2000: 401), who locates music fundamentally in the mother-infant relationship in the human species with its much longer period of infant dependence on adult care, compared to any other species, writes:

I suggest that the biologically endowed sensitivities and competencies of mother infant interaction were found by evolving human groups to be emotionally affecting and functionally effective when used and when further shaped and elaborated in culturally created ceremonial rituals where they served a similar purpose to attune or synchronize, emotionally conjoin, and enculturate the participants. These unifying and pleasurable features (maintained in children’s play) made up a sort of

The Evolution of the Sociology of Religion

The beginnings of the sociology of religion are barely distinguishable from the beginnings of sociology per se. This is hardly surprising, given that its earliest practitioners were the founding fathers of sociology itself, all of whom were committed to the serious study of religion as a crucial variable in the understanding of human societies. Of course, they did this from different perspectives – the outlining of which will form an important part of the paragraphs that follow – but in the early days of the discipline, the paramount significance of religion for human living was taken for granted, if not universally approved. In later decades this significance was seriously questioned, not least by sociologists of religion themselves – a fact exemplified in their prolonged pre occupation with the secularization thesis. In the last two decades, however, the tide of opinion has begun to turn in a different direction, driven – very largely – by the overwhelming (and at times somewhat frightening) presence of religion in the modern world. Given the undeniable relevance of the religious factor to the geopolitical configurations of the new century, the sociological study of religion has gained a new urgency. New tools of analysis and new conceptual understandings are becoming increasingly necessary if sociologists are to

understand (a) what is going on and (b) how they might contribute to an evidently important debate.

This trajectory – from taken-for-granted significance, through assumed decline, to a reestablished place in the canon – forms the theme of this chapter. It will be exemplified in various ways, referring in turn to theoretical debate, methodological endeavor, and substantive issues. It will, however, be overlaid, by a number of significant variations.

In the main, these relate to the different contexts in which sociologists work, contrasts that take into account Both national or regional differences and the pressures that derive from professional obligations (research does not take place in a vacuum). It is unlikely, for example, that a European sociologist employed by a Catholic organization in the immediate postwar period would be preoccupied by the same questions as an American working for a secular organization in the same decade. The fact that these two parts of the world were, then as now, experiencing entirely different patterns of growth and/or decline simply reinforces the point already made.

With this double aim in mind – that is, to establish and exemplify the theme, but at the same time to take into account at least some of the major variations – this chapter is structured as follows. It begins with an account of the founding fathers Grace Davie (Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim), underlining their enduring legacy to the sociology of religion – noting, however, that this legacy resonates differently. Not only do fashions come and go, but crucially in this case, the availability of good translation is a necessary preliminary for the great majority of readers. The lack of uniformity becomes even more explicit as the sociology of religion moves forward: An entirely different agenda emerges in Europe from that in the United States. The evolution in continental (primarily Catholic) Europe concerns, very largely, the emergence of a fully fledged sociology of religion from what has been called *sociologie religieuse*, a metamorphosis that took place in a part of the world heavily influenced by decline at least in the formal indicators of religious activity. Unsurprisingly, such debates are less relevant in the Anglo-Saxon world, where a very different way of working has evolved. These contrasting evolutions form the substance of the second section of the chapter.

The third will continue the contrast, introducing the two competing theoretical paradigms in the sub discipline: secularization theory and rational choice theory. Both are covered in some detail

in later chapters (e.g., Chapters 8 and 9). The point to be made in this chapter concerns the emergence of two contrasting theories at different times, in different places, to answer different questions – their roots go back centuries rather than decades (Warner 1997). This is far from being a coincidence; sociological thinking, like the world that it tries to explain, is contingent. The fourth and final section will suggest, however, that the time has come to move beyond these two paradigms (with the implication that either one or the other is correct, but not both) to more sophisticated tools of analysis, if we are to understand an increasingly global phenomenon.

It is unlikely that one conceptual frame will suffice to explain all cases. A series of substantive examples will be used to illustrate both commonality and difference in the subject matter of sociology – across a range of global regions and in a wide variety of contexts.

THE FOUNDING FATHERS

In their sociological writing, Marx, Weber, and Durkheim were reacting to the economic and social upheavals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, prompted more often than not by the devastating consequences that rapid industrialization had inflicted on the European populations of which they were part. The study of religion could hardly be avoided within this framework, for religion was seen as an integral part of the society that appeared to be mutating beyond recognition. Each writer, however,

tackled the subject from a different perspective (Giddens 1971; Lowith 1982; O'Toole 1984). Karl Marx (1818–83) predates the others by at least a generation. There are two essential elements in the Marxist perspective on religion: The first is descriptive, the second evaluative. Marx described religion as a dependent variable; in other words, its form and nature are dependent on social and above all economic relations, which form the bedrock of social analysis. Nothing can be understood apart from the economic order and the relationship of the capitalist/worker to the means of production. The second aspect follows from this but contains an evaluative element. Religion is a form of alienation; it is a symptom of social malformation which disguises the exploitative relationships of capitalist society. Religion persuades people that such relationships are natural and, therefore, acceptable. It follows that the real causes of social distress cannot be tackled until the religious element in society is stripped away to reveal the injustices of the capitalist system; everything else is a distraction.

Subsequent debates concerning Marx's approach to religion have to be approached with care. It has become increasingly difficult to distinguish between (a) Marx's own analysis of religious phenomena, (b) a subsequent school of Marxism as a form of sociological thinking, and (c) what has occurred in the twentieth century in the name of Marxism as a political ideology. The essential and enduring point to grasp from Marx himself is that religion cannot be understood apart from the world of which it is part; this is a crucial sociological insight and central to the evolution of the sub discipline. It needs, however, to be distinguished from an overdeterministic interpretation of Marx that postulates the dependence of religion on economic forces in mechanical terms; this is unhelpful. The final point is more political. It may indeed be the case that one function of religion is to mitigate the very evident hardships of this world and so disguise them. Marx was correct to point this out. Nowhere, however, does Marx legitimate the destructive doctrines of those Marxist regimes that maintained that the only way to reveal the true injustices of society was to destroy – sometimes with hideous consequences – the religious element of society. Marx himself took a longer-term view, claiming that religion would disappear of its own accord given the advent of the class- less society: Quite simply, it would no longer be necessary. The inevitable confusions between Marx, Marxism, and Marxist regimes have, however, had a profound effect on the reception of Marx's ideas in the twentieth century. The total, dramatic, and unforeseen collapse of Marxism as an effective political creed in 1989 is but the last twist in a considerably longer tale. In many ways, Max Weber's (1864–1920) contribution to the sociology of religion should be seen in this light. Rather than simply refuting Marx, Weber's theorizing vindicates much of what Marx himself suggested, as opposed to the vulgarizations of later disciples. Weber stresses the multi causality of social phenomena, not least religion; in so doing he conclusively refutes the standpoint of 'reflective materialism' whereby the religious dimensions of social living simply reflect the material (Giddens 1971: 211). But the causal sequence is not simply reversed; indeed, the emergence of what Weber calls "elective affinities" between material and religious interests are entirely compatible with Marx's own understanding of ideology. The process by which such affinities come into being must, however, be determined empirically – they vary from case to case.

Chapter – 4

Weber's

Weber's influence spread into every corner of sociology, never mind the sociology of religion, generating a huge secondary literature – the remarks that follow are inevitably skeletal. Absolutely central, however, to Weber's understanding of religion is the conviction that this aspect of human living can be constituted as something other than, or separate from society or "the world." Three points follow from this (Beckford 1989: 32). First, the relationship between religion and the world is contingent and variable; how a particular religion relates to the surrounding context will vary over time and in different places. Second, this relationship can only be examined in its historical and cultural specificity. Documenting the details of these relationships (of which elective affinities are but one example) becomes, therefore, the central task of the sociologist of religion. Third, the relationship tends to develop in a determinate direction; a statement which indicates that the distance between the two spheres, religion and society, is being steadily eroded in modern societies. This erosion, to the point where the religious factor ceases to be an effective force in society, lies at the heart of the process known as secularization – through which the world becomes progressively "disenchanted."

These three assumptions underpin Weber's magnum opus in the field,

The *Sociology of Religion* (Weber 1922/1993), that is, his comparative study of the major world faiths and their impact on everyday behavior in different parts of the world. Everyday behavior, moreover, becomes cumulative as people adapt and change their lifestyles; hence, the social consequences of religious decisions. It is at this point that the question of definition begins to resonate, for it is clear that, de facto at least, Weber is working with a substantive definition of religion, despite his celebrated unwillingness to provide a definition as such. He is concerned with the way that the content (or substance) of a particular religion, or more precisely a religious ethic, influences the way that people behave. In other words, different types of belief have different outcomes. Weber goes on to elaborate this theme: The relationship between ethic and behavior not only exists, it is socially patterned and contextually varied. Central to Max Weber's understanding in this respect is, once again, the complex relationship between a set of religious beliefs and the particular social stratum that becomes the principal carrier of such beliefs in any

given society. Not everyone has to be convinced by the content of religious teaching for the influence of the associated ethic to be widespread. The sociologist's task is to identify the crucial social stratum at the key moment in history; it requires careful comparative analysis.

Such questions, moreover, can be posed in ways that are pertinent to the twenty first century rather than the early modern period, the focus of Weber's attentions. One such, for instance, might engage the issue of gender rather than class or social stratum: Why is it that women seem to be more preoccupied by religion than men at least in the Christian West (Walter and Davie 1998)? Will the disproportionate influence of women as the principal carriers of the religious tradition in modern Western societies have an effect on the content of the tradition itself, or will a male view continue to dominate despite the preponderance of women in the churches? What is the relationship between lifestyle and belief in such societies when the roles of men and women are evolving so rapidly?

Such questions are just a beginning, but indirectly at least they build on the work of Max Weber; the approach, once established, can be taken in any number of directions. Inquiries also could be made, for example, about minority groups, especially in societies that are both racially and religiously diverse; it is likely that minorities – and the key carriers within them – will sustain their traditions in ways rather different from the host society, a contrast that leads at times to painful misunderstandings. Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), the exact contemporary of Weber, began from a very different position. Working outward from his study of totemic religion among Australian Aborigines, he became convinced above all of the binding qualities of religion: “Religion celebrates, and thereby reinforces, the fact that people can form societies” (Beckford 1989: 25). In other words, his perspective is a functional one. Durkheim is concerned above all with what religion does; it binds people together.

A recently published account of religion in Britain (Brown 2001) turns on precisely this point: That is, the crucial importance of women in the religious life of Britain up to and indeed after World War II. The 1960s and, more especially, the feminist revolution were the watershed in this respect – no longer were women prepared to be the carriers of familial piety. Not everyone would agree with this argument, but Brown is undoubtedly correct to highlight the significance of gender in the analysis of religious change (and not only in Britain).

What then will happen when time-honored forms of society begin to mutate so fast that traditional patterns of religion inevitably collapse? How will the essential functions of religion be fulfilled? This was the situation confronting Durkheim in France in the early part of the twentieth century (Lukes 1973; Pickering 1975). Durkheim responded as follows: The religious aspects of society should be allowed to evolve alongside everything else, in order that the symbols of solidarity appropriate to the developing social order (in this case incipient industrial society) may emerge. The theoretical position follows from this: Religion as such will always be present for it performs a necessary function. The precise nature of that religion will, however, differ between one society and another and between different periods of time in order to achieve an appropriate “fit” between religion and the prevailing social order. The systemic model, so dear to functionalists, is immediately apparent.

Of the early sociologists, Durkheim was the only one to provide his own definition of religion. It has two elements: A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things which are set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.

First there is the celebrated distinction between the sacred (the set apart) and the profane (everything else); there is an element of substantive definition at this point. The sacred, however, possesses a Functional quality not possessed by the profane; by its very nature it has the capacity to bind, for it unites the collectivity in a set of beliefs and practices which are focused on the sacred object. Acting collectively in a moral community, following Durkheim, is of greater sociological importance than the object of such actions. The uncompromisingly “social” aspects of Durkheim’s thinking are both an advantage and disadvantage. The focus is clearly distinguishable from the psychological (a good thing), but the repeated emphasis on society as a reality *sui generis* brings with it the risk of a different sort of reductionism – taken to its logical conclusion religion is nothing more than the symbolic expression of social experience. Such a conclusion disturbed many of Durkheim’s contemporaries; it is still to some extent problematic, and for sociologists as well as theologians.

The evolution of the sociology of religion cannot be understood without extensive knowledge of the founding fathers and their continuing influence (O’Toole 1984, 2000). A further point is, however, important. The availability of their writing should not simply be assumed; it depended

(indeed it still depends) amongst other things on competent and available translations. Willaime (1999), for example, underlines the fact that the arrival of Weberian thinking in French sociology in the early postwar period offered significant alternatives to those who were trying to understand the changes in the religious life of France at this time. Weber's work (or to be more accurate parts of his work) became available in English almost a generation earlier.

It follows that a careful mapping of the dates of translations of key texts between German, French, and English would Swatos, Kivisto, and Gustafson (1998) stress an additional point. Quite apart from the question of translation, Weber's acceptance into English-speaking sociology was curiously delayed; he remained relatively unknown until his discovery by Talcott Parsons. The arrival of large reveal interesting combinations of theoretical resources in different European societies (as indeed in the United States). What was available to whom in the development of theoretical thinking is not something that should be taken for granted; it could and should be subject to empirical investigation.

THE SECOND GENERATION: OLD WORLD AND NEW

In fact, almost half a century passed before a second wave of activity took place. It came, moreover, from a very different quarter – from within the churches themselves. Such activity took different forms on different sides of the Atlantic. In the United States, where religious institutions remained relatively buoyant and where religious practice continued to grow, sociologists of religion in the early twentieth century were, very largely, motivated by and concerned with the social gospel. A second, rather less positive, theme ran parallel; one in which religion became increasingly associated with the social divisions of American society.

The Social Sources of Denominationalism

By the 1950s and 1960s, however, the principal focus of American sociology lay in the normative functionalism of Talcott Parsons, who stressed above everything the integrative role of religion. Religion – a functional prerequisite – was central to the complex models of social systems and social action elaborated by Parsons. In bringing together these two elements (i.e., social systems and social action), Parsons was drawing on both Durkheim and Weber. Or, as Lechner puts this, “Durkheim came to provide the analytical tools for Parsons's ambivalent struggle with Weber” (Lechner 1998: 353). Ambivalent this struggle may have been, but

Parsons's influence was lasting; it can be seen in subsequent generations of scholars, notably Robert Bellah and Niklas Luhmann. The relationship with American society is also important. The functionalism of Parsons emerged from a social order entirely different from either the turbulence that motivated the Founding Fathers or the long-term confrontations between church and state in the Catholic nations of Europe, most notably in France (see later); postwar America symbolized a settled period of industrialism in which consensus appeared not only desirable but possible. The assumption that the social order should be underpinned by religious values was widespread.

Such optimism did not last. As the 1960s gave way to a far less confident decade, the sociology of religion shifted once again. This time to the social construction of meaning systems epitomized by the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966). The Parsonian model is inverted; social order exists but it is constructed from below. So constructed, religion offers believers crucial explanations and meanings which they use to make sense of their lives, not least during times of personal or social crisis. Hence Berger's (1967) idea of religion as a form of "sacred canopy" that shields both individual and society from "the ultimately destructive consequences of a seemingly chaotic, purposeless existence" (Karlenzig 1998). The mood of the later 1970s, profoundly shaken by the oil crisis and its effects on economic growth, reflects the need for meaning and purpose (no longer could numbers of German scholars in the United States as the result of Hitler's rise to power have tened a process that had already started in the 1930s. A second "renaissance" occurred in the West as a whole in the 1980s.

The European origins of the secularization thesis as opposed to the American genesis of the new paradigm. The beginnings of the two models go back centuries rather than decades. To be more precise, the secularization thesis finds its roots in medieval Europe some eight hundred years ago. The key element is the existence of a monopoly church with authority over the whole society; both church and authority are kept in place by a series of formal and informal sanctions. It is, moreover, the monopoly itself that provides the plausibility structure – the authority is not only unquestioned, but unquestionable. Given the inseparability of monopoly and plausibility, the latter will inevitably be undermined by increasing ideological and cultural pluralism, a relentless process with multiple causes. Documenting this process, or gradual undermining, is a

central task of sociologists, who quite correctly describe their subject matter (a metanarrative) as the process of secularization.

The alternative paradigm, or metanarrative, begins rather later – say, two hundred rather than eight hundred years ago and in the new world not the old, to be more precise in the early years of the United States as an independent nation. Here there was no monopoly embodied in a state church, simply a quasi-public social space that no single group could dominate. All kinds of different groups or denominations emerged to fill this space, each of them utilizing particular religious markers as badges of identity (religion was much more important in this respect than social class). Simply surviving required considerable investment of time, talent, and money, not least to attract sufficient others to one's cause in face of strong competition. The possibilities of choice were endless, and choice implies rejection as well as acceptance. The affinities with modernday America are immediately apparent, a situation admirably described in Ammerman's *Congregations and Community* (Ammerman 1997a). Such a book could not have been written about Europe.

Interestingly, as Warner himself makes clear, the classics can be drawn on in both situations, although in rather different ways. Identities, for example, can be constructed in Durkheimian terms in relation to the whole society (in Europe) or to a particular community within this (in the United States). Likewise, Protestant sects can be seen as undermining a European monopoly or, rather more positively, as competitors in an American market – either way, Weber's insights are helpful. Conversely, attempts to impose either the secularization or the rational choice (religious economies) paradigm wholesale on to the alternative context really do cause trouble. Such attempts arise from a conviction that one paradigm, and only one, must be right in all circumstances.

That, in my view, is mistaken. Which is not to say that elements of each approach cannot be used to enlighten certain aspects of the alternative situation – clearly, that can be done and to considerable effect. A useful illustration of positive application can be found, for instance, in Hamberg and Pettersson's (1994) testing of the rational choice hypothesis in different regions of Sweden. More precisely, the authors investigate the effect of pluralism on religious activity in Sweden. Their findings support the rational choice approach and in one of the most religiously homogeneous societies of Europe.

Chapter – 5

Beyond The Paradigms: A Global Challenge

The crucial point to grasp, however, lies very much deeper and illustrates, once again, the essential difference between Europe and the United States in terms of religious understandings. More specifically, it lies in the fact that Europeans, as a consequence of the state church system (an historical fact whether you like it or not) regard their churches as public utilities rather than competing firms. That is the real legacy of the European past. With this in mind, it is hardly surprising that Europeans bring to their religious organizations an entirely different repertoire of responses from their American counterparts. Most Europeans, it is clear, look at their churches with benign benevolence – they are useful social institutions, which the great majority in the population are likely to need at one time or another in their lives (not least at the time of a death). It simply does not occur to most of them that the churches will or might cease to exist but for their active participation. It is this attitude of mind that is both central to the understanding of European religion and extremely difficult to eradicate. It, rather than the presence or absence of a market, accounts for a great deal of the data on the European side of the Atlantic. It is not that the market isn't there (it quite obviously is in most parts of Europe, if not quite in all); it is simply that the market doesn't work, given the prevailing attitudes of large numbers in the population.

What I am trying to say, using a geographical rather than sociological metaphor, is that a map of the Rockies (i.e., more rigorous versions of rational choice theory) has to be adapted for use in Europe – just like the map of the Alps (secularization theory) for those who venture in the reverse direction. The map of the Rockies can, however, open up new and pertinent questions if used judiciously and not only to test the significance of religious pluralism strictly speaking (see Hamberg and Pettersson 1994). Interesting possibilities emerge, for example, in the cultural as well as organizational applications of rational choice theory (RCT) – not least with respect to televangelism. Why is it that the European market fails to operate with respect to this particular form of religion? Or to put the point even more directly, why has it not been possible to create a market for this particular product? Is it simply the lack of a suitable audience or is something more subtle at stake?

It might, in addition, be useful to examine in more depth, and over a longish historical period, the relationship between capital and religion in Europe. In different historical periods, this has been extremely strong (hence, for example, the wealth of religious art and architecture, particularly in Southern Europe – Tuscan examples come particularly to mind). Currently, however, the relationship is weak, or at least much weaker, although it is interesting to discover how much Europeans are willing to invest in their religious buildings at the turn of the millennium, even among Nordic populations where churchgoing is notoriously low (Backstrom and Bromander 1995). Used imaginatively, RCT can open up new and interesting areas of enquiry on both sides of the Atlantic. All too easily, however, the debate turns into a sociological fight to the death in which one paradigm has to emerge the winner. One form of this “fight” can be found in repeated attempts to identify the real “exceptionalism.” Is this to be the United States, that is, a vibrant religious market in a highly developed country, but clearly without parallel in the modern (developed) world? Or is this to be Europe, the only part of the world in which secularization can be convincingly linked to modernization, but no longer – as was assumed for so long – a global prototype with universal applicability?

Casanova (2001) is one author anxious to escape from this repetitious and circular argument; we need, he argues, to think increasingly in global terms. There is plenty of evidence that Europeans feared that televangelism would penetrate European culture given the increasing deregulation of the media; in Britain, for example, it became a major preoccupation in parliamentary debate (Quicke and Quicke 1992).

What, then, confronts the sociologist of religion who is willing to take the global challenge seriously? This question can be answered in two ways – first, by using a geographical frame, and then by considering a range of global social movements that are essentially religious in nature. Both approaches have implications for empirical as well as theoretical sociology and both can be found in the useful collection of essays edited by Berger (1999).

A Geographical Perspective

In the previous sections, a firm distinction was made between the old world and the new, contrasting both the empirical realities and the sociological thinking in Europe with their counterparts in the United States. Without, for the time being, venturing beyond Christianity, it is

now necessary to take into account at least parts of the developing world: Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and the Christianized parts of the Far East (for example South Korea and the Philippines). In none of these places are the indicators of secularization persuasive; quite the reverse, in fact, as traditional forms of Christianity compete with innovative expressions of the faith – notably widespread and popular Pentecostalism – for the attentions, in many cases, of growing populations. It is true that the traditional disciplines of the Christian churches may be breaking down, but not in favor of the secular. The movement, rather, is toward new (much less control-

lable) expressions of Christianity and emergent hybrids, notably in the Latin American case, where an individual may be one thing in the morning (a Christian denomination) and quite another (not least an Afro-Brazilian variant) in the afternoon. Add to this already extensive list the parts of the world dominated by other world faiths – the hugely varied Islamic nations, the competing religious traditions of the Middle East, the Sikhs and Hindus of the Indian subcontinent and the great diversity of Eastern religions and Berger's claim that the developing world is "as furiously religious as ever" seems well justified (Berger 1992: 32).

In geographical terms, the only possible exceptions to a religious worldview are Japan and West Europe, together with West Europe's outposts in the form of the English speaking Dominions – all of which, it is important to note, constitute developed global regions. (The great unknown remains, of course, the immense Chinese population, in which it is still difficult to predict what is likely to happen in religious terms both in the short and long term.) The fact that the two most secularized parts of the globe are two of the most developed does, however, give pause for thought regarding the possible connections of modernization and secularization – the core of both modernization and secularization theory (Inglehart 1990, 1997).

These cases, however, need to be balanced against the United States, which – it is abundantly clear – remains a very notable exception; the relationship is by no means proven. The situation is, in fact, confused rather than clear-cut, a fact revealed in the rich selection of material brought together in Heelas and Woodhead (2000), and increasingly in the most recent textbooks concerned with the sociology of religion (Aldridge 2000).

Interestingly, Inglehart's most recent account is rather more nuanced. Economic modernization is indeed associated with value change, but such change is path dependent. In other words, the broad cultural heritage of a society (not least the religious element) leaves an imprint that endures despite modernization (Inglehart and Baker 2000).

It becomes increasingly apparent, for example, that different trends may well coexist within the same society, quite apart from the contrasts between different global regions. We need tools of analysis that are able to cope with this complexity.

Thematic Approaches

A thematic approach to the same question tackles the material from a different perspective – looking in turn at three global social movements: (a) global Catholicism, (b) popular Pentecostalism, and (c) the possibly overlapping category of fundamentalism (encompassing a variety of world faiths). Casanova (2001) points out the paradox in modern currents of Catholicism. At precisely the moment when European expressions of Catholicism begin to retreat almost to the point of no return – as the convergence between state and church through centuries of European history becomes increasingly difficult to sustain – Catholicism takes on new and global dimensions. It becomes a transnational religious movement, and as such has grown steadily since 1870 (the low point of the European Church). The Papal Encyclicals from this time on are concerned primarily with the dignity of the human person and with human (not only Catholic) rights, a movement that accelerates rapidly as a result of the Second Vatican Council. Transnational Catholic movements begin to grow (for example, Liberation Theology, the Opus Dei and Comunione e Liberazione), centers of learning become equally international, so, too, does the Roman Curia emerging as it does from cross-cutting, transnational networks. One aspect of such links is the growing tendency toward movement, manifested among other things in the increasing popularity of pilgrimage. Most visible of all, however, is the person of the Pope himself, without doubt a figure of global media proportions. The Pope goes nowhere without planeloads of the world's media accompanying him, and his health is the subject of constant and minute speculation in the international press. Conversely the capacity of the Pope to draw huge crowds of Catholics (not least young people) to one place can be illustrated in the World Youth Days that took place as part of the millennium celebrations in Rome 2000: Two million young people came together in the final all-night vigil and Sunday morning mass at the

Tor Vergata University (August 19–20). Few, if any, secular organizations could compete with these numbers. It is hardly surprising that the different elements that make up this increasingly global movement attract negative as well as positive comments. That is not the point. The point is the existence of a transnational form of religion with, at the very least, considerable influence on a wide range of moral and ethical debates, crucial factors for the sociologist of religion at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Global Pentecostalism is rather different in that its immediate impact is less visible. Its effect on huge and probably growing numbers of individuals is, however, undeniable, a phenomenon that is attracting the attention of increasing numbers of scholars and in a variety of disciplines. The literature, as a result, is growing fast (see, for example, Corten 1997).

Coleman (2001), Freston (2001), and Martin (2002) offer state-of-the-art accounts of this phenomenon, each concentrating on a different dimension. Coleman, for example, is primarily concerned with “Health and Wealth” Christians and how they establish effective global communications, not least by means of electronic technologies. Freston concentrates on the political dimensions of evangelical Christianity, an aspect that is particularly difficult to discern given the fragmented, fissiparous, and often apolitical.

It is not possible to define religion, to say what it "is," at the start of a presentation such as this. Definition can be attempted, if at all, only at the conclusion of the study. The "essence" of religion is not even our concern, as we make it our task to study the conditions and effects of a particular type of social action. The external courses of religious behavior are so diverse that an understanding of this behavior can only be achieved from the viewpoint of the subjective experiences, notion, and purposes of the individuals concerned--in short, from the viewpoint of the religious behavior's "meaning."

This-worldly Orientation

The most elementary forms of religiously or magically motivated action are oriented to this world. "That it may go well with you. And that you may prolong your days upon the earth" shows the motivation of religiously or magically commanded actions. Even human sacrifices, although uncommon among urban peoples, were performed in the Phoenician maritime cities without any other-worldly expectations whatsoever. Furthermore, religiously or magically

motivated action is relatively rational action, especially in its earliest forms. It follows rules of experience, though it is not necessarily action in accordance with means-end rationality. Rubbing will elicit sparks from pieces of wood, and in like fashion the mimetic actions of a "magician" will evoke rain from the heavens. The sparks resulting from twirling the wooden sticks are as much a "magical" effect as the rain evoked by the manipulations of the rainmaker. Thus, religious or magical action or thinking must not be set apart from the range of everyday purposive action, particularly since the elementary ends of the religious and magical actions are predominantly economic.

Magic

Only we, judging from the standpoint of our modern views of nature, can distinguish objectively in such behavior those attributions of causality which are "correct" from those which are "incorrect," and then designate the incorrect attributions of causality as irrational, and the corresponding acts as "magic." the divine partner; it was deemed appropriate for the human partner to remind him of their inviolability, within the limits as proper vis-a-vis an omnipotent god. This is the primary root of the promissory character of Israelite religion, a character that despite numerous analogues is found nowhere else in such intensity.

Local God and Foreign God

On the other hand, it is a universal phenomenon that the formation of a political band entails installation of its corresponding god. The Mediterranean formation of a political band (synoikismos) was always a reorganization, if not necessarily a new creation, of a cultic community under a city-state god. The classical bearer of the important phenomenon of a political "local god" was of course the city-state, yet it was by no means the only one. On the contrary, every enduring political band had a special god who guaranteed the success of the political action of the group. When fully developed, this god was altogether exclusive with respect to outsiders, and in principle he accepted offerings and prayers only from the members of his band, or at least he was expected to act in this fashion. But since one could not be certain of this, disclosure of the method of effectively influencing the god was usually prohibited strictly. The stranger was thus not only a political, but also a religious alien. Even when the god of another political band had the same name and attributes as that of one's own polity, he was still

considered to be different. Thus the Juno of the Venetian is not that of the Romans, just as for the Neapolitan the Madonna of each chapel is different from the others; he may adore the one and berate or dishonor the other if she helps his competitors. A band may call and adore the god of enemy in one's own land if the god abandon the enemy. This invocation to the gods of a rival band to abandon their band in behalf of another was practiced by Camillus before Veii. The gods of one band might be stolen or otherwise acquired by another band, but this does not always accrue to the benefit of the latter, as in the case of the ark of the Israelites which brought plagues upon the Philistine conquerors.

In general, political and military conquest also entailed the victory of the stronger god over the weaker god of the vanquished band. Of course not every god of a political band was a local god, bound to the center location the band's territory. The god (lares) of the Roman household changed their location as the household moved; the God of Israel was represented, in the narrative of the wandering in the wilderness, as journeying with and at the head of his people. Yet, in contradiction to this account, Yahweh was also represented --and this is his decisive hallmark - as a God "from afar," a God of the nations who resided on Sinai, and who approached in the storm with his heavenly hosts only when the military need of his people required his presence and participation.

It has been assumed correctly that this distinctive quality of "working from afar," which resulted from the reception of a foreign god by Israel, was a factor in the development of the concept of Yahweh as the universal and omnipotent God. As a rule, a local god and also a "monolatry" god who demanded of his adherents exclusive worship did not lead to universal monotheism, but tended to strengthen particularism of the god. Thus, the development of local gods resulted in an unusual strengthening of political particularism.

Chapter - 6

City-state God

This was true even of the city-state, which was as exclusive of other communities as one church is toward another, and which was absolutely opposed to the formation of a unified priesthood overarching the various bands. In marked contrast to the "national-state," a compulsory relationship to a territorial "institution," the city-state remained essentially a personal relationship to cultic community of the civic god. The city-state was further constituted of personal cultic bands of tribal, clan, and house gods, which were exclusive one another with respect to their personal cults. Moreover, the city-state was also exclusive internally, with regard to those who stood apart from the particular cults of kinship and households. Thus in Athens, a person who had no household god (zeus herkeios) could not hold office, as was the case in Rome with anyone who did not belong to the band of the clans (patres). The special plebeian official (tribuni plebis) was covered only by a human oath (sacro sanctus); he had no association to the clans, and hence no legitimate official (imperium), but only a protector of the plebeian (podesta).

The local geographical connection of the band's god reached its maximum development where the very site of a particular band came to be regarded as specifically sacred to the god. This was increasingly the case of Palestine in relation to Yahweh, with the result that the tradition depicted him as a god who, living far off but desiring to participate in his cultic communion and to honor it, took cartloads (the Ark of the covenant) to be brought to the Palestinian soil.

Bands and God

The rise of genuinely local gods is conditioned not only by permanent settlement, but also by certain other factors that mark the local band as a carrier of political goal. Normally, a local god and his cultic community reach fullest development on the foundation of the city as a separate political band with corporate rights, independent of the court and the person of the ruler. Consequently, such a full development of the local god is not found in India, the Far East, or Iran, and occurred only in limited measure in northern Europe, in the form of the tribal god. On the other hand, outside the sphere of autonomous cities this development occurred in Egypt, as early as the stage of animistic religion, in the interest of guaranteeing districts. From the city-

states, local gods spread to confederacies such as those of the Israelites, Aetolians, etc., which were oriented to this model. From the viewpoint of the history of ideas, this concept of the band as the local carrier of the cult is an intermediate type between the strict patrimonial notion of political action and the purely anti-rational notion of the band action and compulsory institution, such as the modern "territorial corporate organization."

Not only political bands but also occupational and vocational bands have their special gods or saints. These were still entirely absent in the Vedic pantheon, corresponding the stage of economic development. On the other hand, the ancient Egyptian god of scribes indicates bureaucratization, just as the presence all over the globe of special gods and saints for merchants and all sorts of crafts reflects increasing occupational differentiation. As late as the 19th century, the Chinese army carried through the canonization of its war god signifying that the military was regarded as a special "vocation" among others. This is in contrast to the conception of the war gods of the ancient Mediterranean sea coasts and of the Iran, who were always great national gods.

Monotheism

Just as the notion of the gods vary, depending on natural and social conditions, so too there are variations in the potential of a god to achieve primacy in the pantheon, or to monopolize divinity. Only Judaism and Islam are strictly "monotheistic" in their fundamental. The Hindu and Christian notions of the sole or supreme deity are theological masks of an important and unique religious interest in salvation through the human incarnation of a divinity, which stand in the way of pure monotheism. The path to Thus, these two types of influences, namely, the power of prophetic charisma and the lasting habits of the masses, affect the work of the priests in their systematization, though their directions tend to oppose one another at many points. But even apart from the fact that prophets practically always come out of lay circles or find their support in them, the laity is not composed of exclusively traditionalistic powers. Lay rationalism is another social force of which the priesthood must take account. Different social strata may be the bearers of this lay rationalism.

RELIGIOSITY OF SOCIAL STRATA

Peasant

The lot of peasants is so strongly tied to nature, so dependent on organic processes and natural events, and economically so little oriented to rational systematization that in general the peasantry will become a carrier of religion only when it is threatened by enslavement or propertyless, either by domestic forces (financial or manorial) or by external political forces.

Ancient Israel

Ancient Israelite religious history already manifested both major threats to the peasant class: first, threat of enslavement by foreign powers, and second, conflicts between peasants and landed manors (who in Antiquity resided in the cities). The oldest documents, particularly the Song of Deborah, reveal the typical elements of the struggle of a peasant confederacy, comparable to that of the Aetolians, Samnites, and Swiss. Another point of similarity with the Swiss situation is that Palestine possessed the geographical character of a land bridge, being situated on a great "trade route" which spanned the provinces from Egypt to the Mesopotamia. This facilitated early a money economy and culture contacts.

The Israelite confederacy directed its efforts against both the Philistines and the Canaanite land manors who dwelt in the cities. These latter were knights who fought with iron chariots, "warriors trained from their very youth," as Goliath was described, who sought to enslave and render tributary the peasantry of the mountain slopes where milk and honey flowed.

It was a most significant constellation of historical factors that this struggle, as well as the unification of social strata and the expansion of the Mosaic period, was constantly renewed under the leadership of the Yahweh religion's saviors ("messiahs," from mashiah, "the anointed one," as Gideon and others, the so-called "Judges," were termed). Because of this distinctive leadership, religious pragmatism that far transformed the usual agrarian cults entered very early into the religious piety of the Palestinian peasantry. But not until the city of Jerusalem had been conquered did the cult of Yahweh, with its Mosaic social law, become a genuinely ethical religion. Indeed, as the social denunciation of the prophets demonstrate, even here this took place partly under the influence of agrarian social reform movements directed against the urban landed manors and wealthy notables, and by reference to the social moralism of the Mosaic law regarding the equalization of social status.

Passivity of Peasant

But prophetic religion has by no means been the product of specifically agrarian influences. A typical plebeian fate was one of the dynamic factors in the moralism of the first and only theologian of official Greek literature, Hesiod. But he was certainly not a typical "peasant." The more agrarian character a cultural development is condition, for example, Rome, India, or Egypt, the more likely the agrarian element of the population will fall into a pattern of traditionalism, and the less the religion of the masses will reach ethical rationalization. Thus, in the later development of Judaism and Christianity, the peasants did not appear as the carriers of rational ethical movements. While this statement is completely true of Judaism, in Christianity the participation of the peasantry in rational ethical movements took place only in exceptional cases and then in a communist, revolutionary form. The puritanical sect of the Donatists in Roman Africa, the Roman province of greatest land accumulation, appears to have been very popular among the peasantry, but this was the sole example of peasant concern for a rational ethical movement in Antiquity.

The Taborites, insofar as they were derived from peasant groups, the peasant carriers of "divine right" in the German Peasants' War (1524-5), the English radical communist small-holders, and above all the Russian peasant sectarians--all these have origins in agrarian communism by the pre-existing, more or less developed communal ownership of land. All these groups felt themselves threatened of propertyless, and they turned against the official church in the first instance because it was the recipient of tax and served as the spiritual defender of the financial and landed manors. Peasant as the carrier of religious ethic is possible only on the basis of an already existing ethical religion which contained specific promises that might suggest and justify a revolutionary natural law. More will be said about this in another context. Hence, in Asia, the combination of religious prophecy with revolutionary currents took a different direction altogether, for example, as in China, and did not assume the form of a genuine peasant movement. Only rarely does the peasantry serve as the carrier of any other sort of religion than magic.

Zoroastrianism

Yet the prophecy of Zoroaster apparently appealed to the (relative) rationalism of ordered peasantry work and raising domestic animals. He struggled against the orgiastic religion of the false prophets, which entailed the torture of animals. This, like the cult of intoxication which

Moses combated, was presumably associated with the bacchantic tearing of live animals. In the religion of the Parsees, only the cultivated soil was regarded as pure from the magical point of view, and therefore only agriculture was absolutely pleasing to god. Thus, even after the original prophecy of Zoroaster had undergone considerable transformation as a result of its accommodation to the needs of everyday life, Zoroastrianism retained a distinctive agrarian character, and consequently a anti-urban tendency in its doctrine of social ethics. But to the degree that Zoroaster himself set certain economic interests in its movement, these were probably in the beginning the interests of princes and lords in the peasants' ability to pay taxes, rather than the interests of peasants.

As a general rule, the peasantry remained primarily involved with weather magic and animistic magic or ritualism; insofar as it developed any ethical religion, the focus was on a purely formalistic ethic in relation to both god and priests as formulated, "I give, that you give me" (do ut des). That the peasant has become the distinctive prototype of the pious person who is pleasing to god is a thoroughly modern phenomenon, with the exception of Zoroastrianism and a few scattered examples of opposition to urban culture and its consequences on the part of patriarchal and feudalistic strata, or conversely, of intellectuals grieved with the world.

None of official religions of Eastern Asia had any notion of the religious significance of the peasant. Indeed, in the religions of India, and most consistently in the salvation religion of Buddhism, the peasant is religiously suspect or actually condemned because of the absolute prohibition against taking the life of any living beings (ahimsa).

providing capital for traveling traders who required it. Originally being land lords, these merchants became, in historical times, an urban nobility which had grown rich from such occasional trade. Others started as tradesmen who having acquired landed property were seeking to climb into the families of the nobility. To the category of the commercial patriciate there were added, as the financing of public administration developed, the political capitalists whose primary business was to meet the financial needs of the state as providers and by supplying governmental credit, together with the financiers of colonial capitalism, an enterprise that has existed in all periods of history. None of these strata has ever been the primary carrier of an ethical or salvation religion. At any rate, the more privileged the position of the commercial status, the less it has evinced any inclination to develop an other-worldly religion.

The religion of the noble plutocrat in the Phoenician trading cities was entirely this-worldly in orientation and, so far as is known, entirely non-prophetic. Yet the intensity of their religious interests and their fear of the gods, who were described as possessing very disastrous traits, were very impressive. On the other hand, the warrior maritime nobility of ancient Greece, which was partly piratical and partly commercial, has left behind in the *Odyssey* a religious document corresponded with its own interests, and displayed a striking lack of respect for the gods. The god of wealth in Chinese Taoism, who is universally respected by merchants shows no ethical traits; he is of a purely magical character. So, too, the cult of the Greek god of wealth, Pluto -- indeed primarily of agrarian character-- formed a part of the Eleusinian mysteries, which set up no ethical demands apart from ritual purity and freedom from blood guilt. Augustus, in a characteristic political move, sought to turn the stratum of freemen with their strong capital resources, into special carriers (*seviri Augustales*) of the cult of Caesar. But this stratum showed no distinctive religious tendencies otherwise.

In India, that section of the commercial stratum which followed the Hindu religion, particularly all the banking people which derived from the ancient state capitalist financiers and large-scale traders, belonged for the most part to the sect of the Vallabhacarya. These were adherents of the Vishnu priesthood of Govardhana, as reformed by Vallabha. They followed a form of erotically colored worship of Krishna and Rudra in which the cultic meal in honor of their savior was transformed into a kind of elegant feast. In medieval Europe, the great commercial guilds of the Guelph cities, like the *Arte di Calimala* in Florence, were of course papist in their politics, but very often they virtually ignored the churchly prohibition against usury by mechanical devices which frequently created an effect of mockery. In Protestant Holland, the great and distinguished lords of trade, being Arminians in religion, were characteristically oriented to power politics and became the chief foes of Calvinist ethical rigor.

Everywhere, skepticism or indifference to religion are and have been the widely diffused attitudes of large-scale traders and financiers. But as against these easily understandable phenomena, the acquisition of new capital or, more correctly, capital continuously and rationally employed in a productive enterprise for the acquisition of profit, especially in industry (which is the characteristically modern employment of capital), has in the past been combined frequently and in a striking manner with a rational, ethical social religion among the citizen strata. In the

business life of India there was even a (geographical) differentiation between the Parsees and the Jain sect. The former, adherents of the religion of Zoroaster, retained their ethical rigorism, particularly its unconditional injunction regarding truthfulness, even after modernization had caused a reinterpretation of the ritualistic commandments of purity as hygienic prescriptions. The economic morality of the Parsees originally recognized only agriculture as acceptable to God, and abominated all urban acquisitive pursuits. On the other hand, the sect of the Jains, the most ascetic of the complete political power. On the other hand, in epochs characterized by persecutions, like the period of the Crusades, the hope for retribution flamed up anew, either with a penetrating but vain cry to God for revenge, or with a prayer that the soul of the Jew might "become as dust" before the enemy who had cursed him. In the latter case there was no recourse to evil words or deeds, but only a silent waiting for the fulfillment of God's commandments and the cultivation of the heart so that it would remain open to God.

To interpret resentment as the decisive element in Judaism would be unacceptable deviation, in view of the many significant historical changes which Judaism has undergone. Nevertheless, we must not underestimate the influence of resentment upon even the basic characteristics of the Jewish religion. When one compares Judaism with other salvation religions, one finds that in Judaism alone resentment has a specific trait and played a unique role not found among the disprivileged status of any other religion.

Theodicy of Disprivilege

A theodicy of disprivilege, in some form, is a component of every salvation religion which draws its adherents primarily from the disprivileged strata, and the developing priestly ethic accommodated to this theodicy wherever it was a component of communal religion based on such groups. The absence of resentment, and also of virtually any kind of social revolutionary ethics among the pious Hindu and the Asiatic Buddhist can be explained by reference to their theodicy of rebirth, according to which the caste order itself is eternal and absolutely just. The virtues or sins of a former life determine birth into a particular caste, and one's behavior in the present life determines one's chances of improvement in the next rebirth. Those living under this theodicy experienced no trace of the conflict experienced by the Jews between the social claims based on God's promises and the actual conditions of dishonor under which they lived.

Chapter - 7

Jewish Theodicy

This conflict precluded any possibility of finding ease in this life for the Jews, who lived in continuous tension with their actual social position and in perpetually fruitless expectation and hope. The Jews' theodicy of disprivilege was despised by the pitiless mockery of the godless heathen, but for the Jews the theodicy had the consequence of transforming religious criticism of the godless heathen into ever-watchful concern over their own fidelity to the law. This preoccupation was frequently tinged with bitterness and threatened by secret self-criticism. The Jew was naturally prone, as a result of his lifelong schooling, to casuistic watch upon the religious obligations of the fellow Jews, on whose punctilious observance of religious law the whole people ultimately depended for Yahweh's favor. There appeared that peculiar mixture of elements characteristic of post-exilic times which combined despair at finding any meaning in this world of vanity with submission to the chastisement of God, anxiety lest one sin against God through pride, and finally a fear-ridden punctiliousness in ritual and morals. All these tensions forced upon the Jew a desperate struggle, no longer for the respect from others, but for self-respect and a sense of dignity. The struggle for a sense of personal worth must have become precarious again and again, threatening to wreck the whole meaning of the individual's conduct of life, since ultimately the fulfillment of God's promise was the only criterion of one's value before God at any given time.

Success in his occupation actually became one tangible proof of God's personal favor for the Jew living in the ghetto. But the conception of "proof" in a god's pleasing "calling," in the sense of inner-worldly asceticism, is not applicable to the Jew. For the Jews, God's blessing was far less anchored in a systematic, ascetic, and rational methodology of life than for the Puritans, whom this was the only possible source of the certainty of salvation. In Judaism, just as the sexual ethic remained naturalistic and anti-ascetic, so also did the economic ethic remain strongly traditionalistic in its principle. It was characterized by a naive enjoyment of wealth, which is of course alien to any systematic asceticism. In addition, Jewish justification by work is fundamentally ritualistic character infused with the distinctive religiosity of mood. We must note that the traditionalistic norm of the Jewish economic ethics self-evidently applied only to one's

fellow people, not to outsiders, which was the case in every ancient ethics. All in all, then, the belief in Yahweh's promises actually produced within the realm of Judaism itself a strong component of resentment.

Jesus's Teaching

It would be completely false to portray the need for salvation, theodicy, or communal religion as something that developed only among disprivileged social strata or even only as a product of resentment, hence merely as the outcome of a "slave revolt in morality." This would not even be true of ancient Christianity, although it directed its promises most sympathetically to the "poor" in spirit and in materials. On the contrary, what immediate consequence has to follow from Jesus's prophecy can be easily observed in the devaluation and breaking of the ritual laws (which had been purposefully composed to segregate the Jews from the outer world) and the consequent dissolution of the religious bondage of the faithful to the caste-like position of a pariah people. To be sure, the early Christian prophecy contained very definite elements of "retribution" doctrine, in the sense of the future equalization of human fates (most clearly expressed in the legend of Lazarus) and of vengeance as God's business. Moreover, here too the Nation of God is interpreted as an earthly kingdom, in the first instance apparently a realm set apart particularly or primarily for the Jews, for they from ancient times had believed in the true God. Yet, in Christianity, precisely the characteristic and penetrating resentment of Jewish pariah religiosity was rooted out by the consequence of the new religious promises.

To be sure, Jesus' own warnings, according to the tradition, of the dangers of wealth for the attainment of salvation were not motivated by asceticism or resentment. For the tradition has preserved many evidences of Jesus' intercourse, not only with publicans (who in the Palestine of that period were mostly small usurers), but also with other wealthy nobles. His warning of wealth was rather based on his teaching of the indifference to worldly matters due to the immediacy of advent expectations. Certainly, the rich young person was unable to leave his wealth and the "world" unconditionally to become perfect, namely, a disciple. But for God all things are possible, even the salvation of the wealthy, despite the difficulties in the way. There were no "propertyless's instincts" in the teaching of Jesus, the prophet of universal love who brought to the poor in spirit and in material the good news of the immediate coming of the Kingdom of God and of freedom from the power of demons.

Buddhist Doctrine

Similarly, any proletarian denunciation of wealth would have been equally alien to the Buddha, for whom the unconditional withdrawal from the world was absolute presupposition for salvation. Buddhism constitutes the most radical antithesis to every type of resentment religiosity. Buddhism clearly arose as the salvation teaching of an intellectual stratum, originally recruited almost entirely from the instrumentalities and those directed at spiritual suffusion. In both cases the person had to eliminate from one's everyday life whatever was not divine, which were primarily the ordinary habits of the human body and the everyday world, as those were given by nature, so that s/he might become more near to god.

States of Sanctification

At this early development of salvational methodology of sanctification, it was still directly linked with the magical notion, in which only the methods are rationalized and accommodated to its new concept concerning the nature of the superhuman and the meaning of religious sanctification. Experience taught that by the hysteric "deadening" of the bodies of those with special religious qualifications it was possible to render such bodies insensible or cataleptic and to produce in them by suggestion sundry actions that normal neurological functioning could never produce. It had also been learned from experience that all sorts of visionary and spiritual experience might easily appear during such states. In different persons, these phenomena might consist in speaking with strange tongues, manifesting hypnotic and other suggestive powers, experiencing impulses toward mystical illumination and ethical conversion, or experiencing profound anguish over one's sins and joyous emotion deriving from suffusion by the spirit of the god. These states might even follow each other in rapid succession. It was a further lesson of experience that all these extraordinary capacities and manifestations would disappear following a surrender to the "natural" functions and needs of the body, or a surrender to the declined interests of everyday life. Thus, such consequences of the relationship of mental states to the natural states of the body and to the everyday social and economic life drew everywhere the development of the yearning for salvation.

Indian Methodology

The specific means of sanctification, in their most highly developed forms, are practically all of Indian sources. In India they were undoubtedly developed in connection with the methodology of the magical coercion of spirits; these means were increasingly used for the methodology of self-deification, and indeed they never lost this character. Self-deification was the prevalent goal of sanctification, from the beginnings of the soma cult of orgy in ancient Vedic times up to the sublimed means of intellectualist ecstasy and the elaboration of erotic orgies (whether in acute or sublimed form, and whether actually enacted or imaginatively), which to this day dominate the most popular form of Hindu religion, the cult of Krishna. Through Sufism, this sublimated type of intellectualist ecstasy and a milder form of orgiastic Dervish were introduced into Islam. To this day Indians are still their typical carriers even as far afield as Bosnia.

Catholicism and Confucianism

The two greatest powers of religious rationalism in history, the Roman church in the Occident and Confucianism in China, consistently suppressed this orgiastic ecstasy in their domains. Christianity also sublimated ecstasy into semi-erotic mysticism such as that of Bernard, fervent worship of Virgin Mary, Quietism of the Counter-Reformation, and the emotional piety of Zinzendorf. The specifically extraordinary nature of the experiences of all orgiastic cults, and particularly of all erotic ones, accounts for no influence on everyday life, or at least on the direction of rationalization or systematization. This is seen clearly in the fact that the Hindu and (in general) Dervish religiosities created no methodology of the conduct of everyday life.

Certainty of Salvation

The development toward systematization and rationalization of attaining religious state of salvation, however, is primarily directed justly to eliminate these contradictions between everyday and extraordinary religious habituations. Out of the unlimited variety of subjective religious states which may be produced by the methodology of sanctification, some of them may finally assume central importance, not only because they represent psycho-physical states of extraordinary quality, but because they also appear to provide a secure and continuous possession of the distinctive religious goods. This is the certainty of salvation (*certitudo salutis*). This certainty may be characterized by a more mystical or by a more actively ethical coloration, about which more will be said presently. But in either case, it constitutes the conscious

possession of a lasting, integrated foundation of the conduct of life. To heighten the conscious awareness of this religious possession, orgiastic ecstasy and irrational, merely irritating emotional means of deadening sensation are replaced, principally by planned reductions of bodily functioning, such as can be achieved by continuous malnutrition, sexual abstinence, regulation of respiration, and the like. In addition, the training of thinking and other psychic processes are directed to a systematic concentration of the mind upon whatever is alone essential in religion. Examples of such psychological training are found in the Hindu techniques of Yoga, the continuous repetition of sacred syllables (for example, Om), meditation focused on circles and other geometrical figures, and various exercises designed to effect a planned evacuation of the consciousness.

Rationalization of Methodology

But in the interest of the lasting and uniform continuity in the possession of the religious good, the rationalization of the methodology of sanctification finally developed even beyond the methods just mentioned to an apparent reversal, a planned limitation of the exercises to those means which insure continuity of the religious habit. This meant the abandonment of all techniques that are irrational from the viewpoint of hygiene. For just as every sort of intoxication, whether it be the orgiastic ecstasy of heroes, erotic orgies or the ecstasy of dancing frenzies, inevitably culminates in physical collapse, so hysterical suffusion with pneumatic emotionalism leads to psychic collapse, which in the religious sphere is interpreted as a state of serious abandonment by god.

In Greece the cultivation of disciplined martial heroism finally attenuated the warrior ecstasy into the constant uniformity (sophrosyne), tolerating only the purely musical, rhythmically engendered forms of ecstasy, and carefully evaluating the "ethos" of music for "political" correctness. In the same way, but in a more thorough manner, Confucian rationalism permitted only the pentatonic scale in music. Similarly, the monastic methodology of sanctification developed increasingly in the direction of rationalization, up to the salvation methodology of ancient Buddhism in India and the Jesuit monastic order in the Occident, which exerted the greatest historical influence. Thus, all these methodologies of sanctification developed a combined physical and psychic hygiene and an equally methodical regulation of the content and scope of all thought and action, thus producing in the individual the most completely conscious,

willful, and anti-instinctual control over one's own physical and psychological processes, and insuring the systematic regulation of life in subordination to the religious end. It is without saying that the goals, the specific contents, and the actual results of the methodology were very variable.

Religious Virtuosi

That human beings differ widely in their religious qualifications was found to be true in every religion upon a systematic methodology of sanctification, regardless of the specific goal of salvation and the particular manner in which it was implemented. As it had been recognized that not everyone possesses the charisma which leads a person to rebirth as a magician, so it was also recognized that not everyone possesses the charisma that makes possible the continuous maintenance in everyday life of the distinctive religious habit which assures the lasting certainty of grace. Therefore, rebirth seemed to be accessible only to an aristocracy of those possessing religious qualifications. Just as magicians had been recognized as possessing distinctive magical qualities, so also the religious virtuosi who work methodically at their salvation now gain a distinctive religious "status" within the community of the faithful, and within this circle they attained what is specific to every status, a social honor.

In India all the sacred laws concerned themselves with the ascetic in this sense, since most of the Hindu religions of salvation were monastic. The earliest Christian sources represent these religious virtuosi as comprising a particular category, distinguished from their comrades in the community, and they later constituted the monastic orders. In Protestantism they formed the ascetic sects or pietistic conventicles.

In Judaism they were the Pharisees, an aristocracy with respect to salvation which stood in contrast to the godless Jews (*am haarez*). In Islam they were the Dervishes, and among the Dervishes the particular virtuosi were the authentic Sufis. In the Russian Skoptsy sect they constituted the esoteric community of the castrated. We shall later return to the important sociological consequences of these categories.

In its inward ethical interpretation, the methodology of sanctification always means practically overcoming particular desires and emotions of raw human nature which had not hitherto been controlled religiously. Whether such human nature is cowardice, brutality, selfishness,

sensuality, against which an individual fought nobly remains the question of a specific individual. These desires and emotions drive the individual away from one's charismatic habituation. This matter belongs among the most important substantive characteristics of any particular religion. But the methodology of sanctification always remains, in this sense of overcoming human nature, an ethic of virtuosi. Like magical charisma, it always requires demonstration of the virtuosity. As we have already discussed, religious virtuosi possess authentic certainty of their sanctification only as long as their own virtuoso religious attitude continues to renew its demonstration in spite of all temptations. This holds true whether the religious virtuosity is a follower of a world-conquering order like that of the Muslims at the time of Umar or whether he is a world-rejecting ascetic like most monks of either the Christian or the less consistent Jainist type. It is equally true of the Buddhist monk, a virtuoso of world-fleeing contemplation, the ancient Christian, who was a virtuoso of passive martyrdom, and the ascetic Protestant, a virtuoso of the inner-worldly vocation. Finally, this holds true of the formal legalism of the Pharisaic Jew and of the acosmistic goodness of such persons as Francis of Assisi. The demonstration of the certainty of sanctification varied in its specific character, depending on the type of religious salvation involved, but it always --both in the case of the Buddhist monk (arhat) and the case of the early Christian-- required the upholding of religious and ethical standards, and hence the avoidance of at least the most corrupt sins.

In early Christianity, a person of positive religious qualification, namely one who had been baptized, was bound never again to fall into a mortal sin. "Mortal sin" designates the type of sin which destroys religious qualification. Therefore, it is unpardonable, or at least capable of remission only at the hands of someone specially qualified, by his possession of charisma, to endow the sinner anew with religious charisma (the loss of which the sin documented). When this virtuoso doctrine became untenable in practice within the ancient Christian communities of the masses, the Montanist clung firmly and consistently to one virtuoso requirement, that the sin of cowardice remain unpardonable, quite as the Islamic religion of heroic warriors unflinching punished apostasy with death. Accordingly, the Montanists segregated themselves from the mass church of the ordinary Christians when the persecutions under Decius (249-251) and Diocletian (284-305) made even this virtuoso requirement impractical, in view of the interest of the priests in maintaining the largest possible membership in the community.

Chapter - 8

Asceticism And Mysticism

As we have already stated at a number of points, the positive character of the certainty of salvation and also of the associated practical conduct is completely different in accordance with the character of the salvational goods, the possession of which assures sanctification. There are in principle two directions of the methodology of sanctification: asceticism and mysticism.

Asceticism

Definition

Salvation may be the distinctive gift of active ethical action performed in the awareness that god directs this action, namely, that the actor is an instrument of god. We shall designate this type of notion toward salvation, which is characterized by a methodology of religious salvation, as "ascetic." This designation is for our purposes here, and we do not in any way deny that this term may be and has been used in another and wider sense. The contrast between our usage and the wider usage will become clearer later on in this work.

World-rejection

Religious virtuosity, in addition to overcoming the natural instinct under a systematic conduct of life, always leads to a radical ethical and religious criticism of the social relationship of life in order to overcome it, since the conventional virtues of the society are inevitably unheroic and utilitarian. Not only does the mere "natural" moral within the world not guarantee salvation, but it actually endangers salvation through preventing from what is alone indispensable for it. The "world" in the religious sense, namely, the domain of social relationships, is therefore a realm of temptations. The world is full of temptations, not only because it is the site of sensual pleasures which are ethically irrational and completely diverting from things divine, but even more because it fosters in the self-satisfaction and self-righteousness in the fulfillment of common obligations of religiously average persons, at the expense of the sole concentration on active achievements of salvation.

Concentration upon salvation may entail a formal withdrawal from the "world": from social and psychological ties with the family, from the possession of worldly goods, and from political, economic, artistic, and erotic activities --in short, from all creaturely interests. Any participation in these affairs may appear as an acceptance of the world and thereby as an alienation from divine. This is "world-rejecting asceticism."

Inner-worldly Asceticism

On the other hand, concentration upon salvation may require the maintenance of specific quality of religious attitude as the elected instrument of God within the world but against to the order of the world. This is "inner-worldly asceticism." In this case the world is presented to the religious virtuoso as the assigned duty. The ascetic's task is to transform the world in accordance with her/his ascetic ideals, in which case the ascetic will become a rational reformer or revolutionary of the "natural right." Examples of this were seen in the "Parliament of the Saints" under Cromwell, in the Quaker State of Pennsylvania, and in the conventicle communism of radical Pietism.

As a result of the differences in religious qualification, such ascetics always become an aristocratic, exclusive organization within or, specifically, outside the world of the average people who surround these ascetics; in principle, an ascetic's aristocracy is not different from a "class". Such an ascetic enterprise might be able to conquer the world, but it still could not raise the religious endowment of the average person to its own level of virtuosity. Any rational religious enterprise that ignored this self-evidence had to experience its consequence.

From the point of view of asceticism, the world as a whole remains to an "eternal damnation" (*massa perditionis*). The only remaining alternative is a renunciation of the illusion that the world can meet to the religious requirement. Consequently, if a demonstration of religious qualification is still to be made within the orders of the world, then the world, for the very reason that it inevitably remains a natural vessel of sin, becomes a challenge for the demonstration of the ascetic qualification and for the strongest possible battle against the world's sins. The world abides in the worthless state of all things of the flesh. Therefore, any sensuous attachment to the world's goods may imperil concentration upon and possession of the good of salvation, and may be a symptom of unholiness of heart and failure of rebirth. Nevertheless, the world as a creation

of god, whose power comes to expression in it despite its creatureliness, provides the only medium through which one's unique religious charisma must prove itself by means of rational ethical action, so that one may become and remain certain of one's own state of grace.

Hence, as the object of this active demonstration, the order of the world in which the ascetic is situated becomes for her/him a "vocation" which s/he must "fulfill" rationally. As a consequence, and although the enjoyment of wealth is forbidden to the ascetic, it becomes his vocation to engage in economic activity which meets rational and ethical requirements and which conforms to strict legality. If the activity brings success and profit, it is regarded as the manifestation of god's reward upon the labor of the faithful and of god's blessing with his economic conduct of life.

Any excess of emotional feeling is prohibited as being a deification of the creaturely, which denies the unique value of the divine gift of grace. On the other hand, "vocation" is the rational and sober laboring for the cause of the rational purposive society of the world, which is set by the God's creation. In similar way, any eroticism that tends to deify the human creature is condemned. On the other hand, it is a divinely prescribed vocation of human "to soberly produce children" (as the Puritans expressed it) within marriage. Then, too, there is a prohibition against the exercise of force by an individual against other human beings for reasons of passion or revenge, and above all for purely personal motives. However, it is the divine will that the rationally ordered state shall suppress and punish sinners and rebels. Finally, all personal secular enjoyment of power is forbidden as a deification of the creaturely. However the rulership of a rational legal order within society is god's will.

Inner-worldly ascetic is a rationalist, not only in the sense that he rationally systematizes his own conduct of life, but also in his rejection of everything that is ethically irrational, whether esthetic, or personal emotional reactions within the world and its orders. The distinctive goal always remains the "conscious," methodical mastering of one's own conduct of life. This type of "inner-worldly asceticism" included, above all, ascetic Protestantism, which held the fulfillment of the duty and task assigned by the god within the world as the sole means of demonstration of religious qualification, though its several branches demonstrated this tenet with varying degrees of consistency.

Mysticism

Mystical Illumination

But the distinctive goods of salvation may not be an active quality of action, that is, an awareness of having fulfilled the divine will; it may instead be a subjective state of a distinctive kind, the most notable form of which is "mystical illumination." This too is achievable only to a few who have particular religious qualifications, and only through a specific kind of systematic activity, namely, "contemplation." To achieve the goal of mystic illumination, contemplation always requires the being free from all everyday interests. According to the experience of the Quakers, God can speak within one's soul only when the creaturely element in person is altogether silent. All contemplative mysticism from Lao Tzu and the Buddha up to Tauler (1300-1361) is in accord with this experience, if not with these very words.

Flight from the World

The consequence of mystic experience may be the absolute withdrawal from the world. Such a contemplative flight from the world, characteristic of ancient Buddhism and to some degree characteristic of all Asiatic and Near Eastern forms of salvation, seems to resemble the ascetic worldview; but it is necessary to make a very clear distinction between the two.

In the sense employed here, "world-rejecting asceticism" is primarily oriented to activity within the world. Only activity within the world helps the ascetic to attain a quality of god's grace for which s/he strives. The ascetic attains renewed assurances of one's state of grace from the consciousness that the power to act flows out of the possession of the central religious salvation, and that through the actions one serves god. The ascetic is conscious of oneself as a warrior of god, regardless of who the enemy is and what the means of doing battle are. For the ascetic, the withdrawal from the world is not a psychological escape, but as a repeated victory over ever new temptations which s/he has to combat actively, time and again. The world-rejecting ascetic sustains at least the negative inner relationship with the "world," against which s/he is designated to struggle. It is therefore more appropriate in his case to speak of a "rejection of the world" than of a "flight from the world." Flight is much more characteristic of the contemplative mystic.

Mystical Union

In contrast to asceticism, contemplation is primarily the quest for "rest" in god and in him alone. It entails inaction of everything that in any way reminds of the "world," and of course the absolute minimization of all outer and inner activity; and in its most consistent form it entails the cessation of thought. By these paths the mystic achieves a subjective state which may be regarded as the possession of the divine, or mystical union (*unio mystica*). This is a distinctive habituation of emotion, which appears to be mediated by "knowledge." To be sure, the mystical union may be grounded more upon the extraordinary content of this knowledge or more upon the emotional coloration of the possession of this knowledge; objectively, the latter is decisive.

Finally, this conception along with other factors accounts for the minimization of organization in the monastic communities of early Buddhism. Conversely, to the extent that an inner-worldly religion of salvation is characterized by distinctively ascetic features, it always demands a practical rationalism, in the sense of the maximization of rational action in a methodical systematization of conduct of life, and the objectification of the rational society of the world orders, whether monastic communities or theocracies.

Oriental Vs. Occidental Salvation

The decisive historical difference between the predominantly oriental and Asiatic types of salvation religion and those found primarily in the Occident is that the former usually inclined to contemplation and the latter in asceticism. The great importance of this distinction, for our purely empirical observation of religions, is in no way diminished by the fact that the distinction is a fluid one, recurrent combinations of mystical and ascetic characteristics demonstrating that these heterogeneous element may combine, as in the monastic religiosity of the Occident. For our concern is with the consequences for action.

In India, even so ascetic a planned methodology of salvation as that of the Jain monks culminated in a purely contemplative and mystical ultimate goal; and in Eastern Asia, Buddhism became the characteristic religion of salvation. In the Occident, on the other hand, apart from a few representatives of a distinctive quietism found only in modern times, even religions of an explicitly mystical type regularly became transformed into an active pursuit of virtue, which was naturally ascetic in the main.

Stated more precisely, there occurred along the way an inner selection of motivations which placed the primary preference upon some type of active conduct, generally a type pointing toward asceticism, and which, in practice, implemented this habituation. Neither the mystical contemplativeness of St. Bernard and his followers, nor Franciscan spirituality, nor the contemplative trends among the Baptists and the Jesuits, nor even the emotional suffusions of Zinzendorf were able to prevent either the community or the individual mystic from attributing superior importance to action and to the demonstration of grace through action, though this was conceptualized very differently in each case, ranging from pure asceticism to attenuated contemplation. It will be recalled that Meister Eckhart finally placed Martha above Mary, notwithstanding the teaching of Jesus.

But to some extent this emphasis upon action was characteristic of Christianity from the very outset. Even in the earliest period, when all sorts of irrational charismatic gifts of the spirit were regarded as the decisive hallmark of sanctity, Christian apologetics had already given a distinctive answer to the question of how one might distinguish the divine origin of the pneumatic achievements of Christ and the Christians from comparable phenomena that were of Satanic or demonic origin: this answer was that the manifest effect of Christianity upon the morality of its adherents proves its divine origin. No Hindu could make this kind of statement.

There are a number of reasons for this basic difference between the salvation religions, Orient and Occident, but at this point it is only necessary to stress the following aspects of the distinction.

Concept of Divine

1. The concept of a transcendental, absolutely omnipotent god, implying the utterly subordinate and creaturely character of the world created by him out of nothing, arose in Asia Minor and was imposed upon the Occident. One result of this for the Occident was that any methodology of salvation to any self-deification and to any genuinely mystical possession of god was permanently closed, at least in the strict sense of the term, because this appeared to be a blasphemous deification of a mere created being. The ultimate pantheistic consequences of the mystical position was blocked as well, being always regarded as heterodox. On the contrary, salvation was always regarded as having the character of an ethical "justification" before god, which ultimately could be fulfilled and proved only by some sort of active action within the

world. The "demonstration" of the actual divine quality of the mystical possession of salvation (according to mystic's own formulation) even arrived at through the path of action alone.

Action in turn always caused mysticism into paradoxes, tensions, and the loss of the mystic's union with god. This was exempted in Hindu mysticism. For the Occidental mystic, the world is a "work" which has been "created" and is not simply given for all eternity, not even in its orders, as in the view of the Asiatic mystic. Consequently, in the Occident mystical salvation could not be found simply in the consciousness of an absolute union with a supreme and wise "order" itself as the only true "being." Nor, on the other hand, could a work of divine providence ever be regarded in the Occident as a possible object of absolute escape, as it was a characteristic of the Orient.

Knowledge vs. Action

2. This contrast between oriental and Occidental religions is closely related to the character of Asiatic salvation religions as pure religions of intellectuals who never abandoned the "meaningfulness" of the empirical world. For the Hindu, there was actually a way leading directly from "insight" into the ultimate consequences of the chain of causality (karma), to illumination, and thence to a unity of "knowledge" and action. This way remained forever closed to every religion that faced the absolute paradox of the creation of a permanently imperfect world by a perfect god. Indeed, in this latter type of religion, the intellectual mastery of the world leads away from god, not toward him. From the practical point of view, those instances of Occidental mysticism which have a purely philosophical foundation stand closest to the Asiatic type.

Roman Law

3. From practical point of this contrast, the observation must be placed on the fact that the Roman Occident alone developed and maintained a rational law, for various reasons yet to be explained. In the Occident the relationship of human to god became, in a distinctive kind, a sort of legally definable relationship of the lord and the servant. Indeed, the question of salvation can be settled by a sort of legal process, a method which was later distinctively developed by Anselm of Canterbury. Such a legalistic methodology of sanctification could never be produced by the

Oriental religions which presupposed an impersonal divine power or, instead of a god standing above the world, a god standing within a world which is self-regulated by the causal chains of karma. Nor could the legalistic direction be taken by religions concepts of Tao, belief in the celestial ancestor gods of the Chinese emperor, or, above all, belief in the Asiatic popular gods. In all these cases the highest form of piety took a pantheistic form, and one which turned practical motivations toward contemplation.

Chapter - 9

Roman Rulership

Another aspect of the rational character of the Occidental methodology of salvation was in origin partly Roman, partly Jewish. The Greeks, despite all the antipathy of the urban participate toward the Dionysian cult of intoxication, set a positive value upon ecstasy, both the acute form of orgiastic intoxication and the milder form of euphoria induced primarily by rhythm and music, as the uniquely divine being. Indeed, among the Greeks the ruling stratum especially lived with this mild form of ecstasy from their very childhood. Since the time when the discipline of the hoplites had become dominant, Greece had lacked a stratum possessing the prestige of the office nobility in Rome. Social relationships in Greece were, in all respects, few and less feudal. In Rome the nobles, who constituted a rational nobility of office of increasing range, and who possessed whole cities and provinces as client holdings of single families, completely rejected ecstasy, like the dance, as utterly improper and unworthy of a noble's sense of dignity. This is obvious even in the terminology employed by the Romans to render the Greek word ecstasy (ekstasis) into Latin "superstition" (superstitio). Cultic dances were performed only among the most ancient colleges of priests, and in the specific sense of a round of dances, only among the college of priesthood (fratres aruales), and then only behind closed doors, after the departure of the community. Most Romans regarded dancing and music as unseemly, and so Rome remained absolutely uncreative in these arts. The Romans experienced the same distaste towards the naked exercises in the gymnasium, which the Spartans had created as an arena for planned exercise. The Senate condemned the Dionysian cult of intoxication. Rome's world-conquering military-official nobility rejected every type of ecstasy and all personal methodology of salvation, which corresponds closely to the equally strong antipathy of the Confucian bureaucracy towards all methodologies of salvation. This was one of the sources of a strictly pragmatic rationalism with a thoroughly practical political orientation.

Roman Church

As Christian communities developed in the Occident, they were strongly characterized by these primarily Roman religiosity. The Christian community of Rome in particular adopted this character against ecstasy quite consciously and consistently. In no instance did this community

accept on its own initiative any irrational element, from charismatic prophecy to the greatest innovations in church music, into the religion or the culture. The Roman Christian community was infinitely poorer than the Hellenistic Orient and the community of Corinth, not only in theological thinkers but also, as the sources seem to suggest, in every sort of manifestation of the "spirit" (pneuma). Whether despite this lack of theology and spirit or because of it, the soberly practical rationalism of Christianity, the most important heritage of Rome to the Christian church, after all set the tone of a dogmatic and ethical systematization of the faith, as is well known.

The development of the methodology of sanctification in the Occident corresponded to this line. The ascetic requirements of the old Benedictine regulations and the reforms of Cluny are, when measured by Hindu or oriental standards, extremely modest and obviously adapted to novices recruited from the higher social circles. Yet, it is precisely in the Occident that labor emerges as the distinctive mark of Christian monasticism, and as a means of both hygiene and asceticism. This emphasis came to the strongest expression in the starkly simple, methodical regulations of the Cistercians. Even the mendicant monks, in contrast to their monastic counterparts in India, were forced into the service of the hierarchy and compelled to serve rational "purposes" shortly after their appearance in the Occident. These rational purposes included preaching, the supervision of heretics, and systematic charity, which in the Occident was developed into a regular "enterprise." Finally, the Jesuit order expelled all the unhygienic elements of the older asceticism, becoming the most completely rational discipline for the purposes of the church. This development is obviously connected with the next point we are to consider.

5. The Occidental church is a unified rational organization with a monarchical head and a centralized or penances. Hence, not the total personality but concrete single actions are valued. Here lacks the development of the integral habituation of ethical personality, which is always newly formed by asceticism, contemplation, or conscious self-control and its constant demonstration. Further, here lacks the necessity to attain the "certainty of salvation" itself by one's effort, and this category, which is so ethically effective, recedes in background.

Confessional and Conduct of Life

The constant regulation of an individual's conduct of life by the priest's control of grace, whether father confessor or spiritual director, under certain conditions, is very effective. But, for the reasons just discussed, the regulation is in practice very often cancelled by the circumstance that there is always the grace remaining to be distributed anew. The institution of the confessional, especially when associated with penances, is insignificant in its practical effects of the conduct of life since it implemented variously by practitioners. The general but few specified type of the confession of sin which was particularly characteristic of the Russian church, frequently taking the form of a collective admission of iniquity, was certainly no way to effect any enduring influence over the conduct of life. Also, the confessional practice of the early Lutheran church was undoubtedly ineffective. The catalog of sins and penances in the Hindu sacred scriptures makes no distinction between ritual and ethical sins, and enjoins ritual obedience (or other forms of compliance which are in line with the status interests of the Brahmins, as virtually the sole method of atonement. As a consequence, the conduct of everyday life could be influenced by these religions only in the direction of traditionalism. Indeed, the sacramental grace of the Hindu gurus even further weakened any possibility of ethical influence. The Catholic church in the Occident carried through the Christianization of Western Europe with unparalleled force, by an unexampled system of confessionals and penances, which combined the techniques of Roman law with the Teutonic conception of fiscal expiation. But the effectiveness of this system in developing a rational method of life was quite limited, even apart from the inevitable hazards of a loose system of dispensations. Even so, the influence of the confessional upon conduct is apparent "statistically," as one might say, in the impressive resistance to the two-children-per-family system among pious Catholics, though the limitations upon the power of the Catholic church in France are evident even in this respect.

Judaism and Ascetic Protestantism

On the other hand, Judaism and ascetic Protestantism know nothing about the confessional and the dispensation of grace by a human or magical sacramental grace. This lack of the confessional and the dispensation, however, exerted a tremendous historical force for the development of an ethical and methodical rationalization of life in both Judaism and ascetic Protestantism, despite their differences in other respects. These religions provide no opportunity for releasing the burden of guilt through the confessional and the institutional grace. Only the Methodists

maintained at certain of their meetings, the so-called "assemblage of the dozens," a system of confession which had even comparable effects, and in that case the effects were in an altogether different direction. From such public confessions of sinfulness there developed the semi-orgiastic penitential practices of the Salvation Army.

Institutional Authority

Institutional grace, by its very nature, ultimately and notably tends to make obedience a cardinal virtue and a decisive precondition of salvation. This of course entails subjection to authority, either of the institution or of the charismatic personality who distributes grace. In India, for example, the guru may on occasion exercise unlimited authority. In such cases the conduct of life is not systematized from within, radiating out from a center which the individual oneself has attained, but rather is nurtured from the center outside the self. The formation of the conduct of life is not pushed in the direction of ethical systematization, but rather in the reverse direction.

Such external authority, however, certainly created an inner ethic, that is, the elastic adjustment to concrete holy commands to changed external circumstances, though in a direction different from an ethic of heart. An example of this elasticity is provided by the Catholic church of the nineteenth century; the prohibition against usury was in practice not enforced, despite of the eternal validity of the official prohibition on the basis of biblical authority and papal decretals. To be sure, this was not practiced openly by outright invalidation, which would have been impossible, but by a confidential directive from the Vatican office to the confessional priests that thenceforth they should refrain from inquiring during confession concerning infractions of the prohibition against usury, and that they should grant absolution for this infraction as long as it could be presupposed that if the Holy See should ever return to the older position the believers would obediently accept such a reversal. There was a period in France when the clergy agitated for a similar treatment of the problem presented by families having only two children. Thus, the ultimate religious value is pure servant-like obedience to the institution, and not concrete, substantive ethical commandments, nor even the qualification of virtuous ethical capacity achieved through one's own methodical ethical actions. Wherever the institutional authority is carried through consistently, the sole principle of the unified conduct of life is a formal humility of obedience, which like mysticism produces a specific character of "brokenness" in the pious. In

this respect, the remark that "freedom of the Catholic consists in being free to obey the Pope" appears to entail universal validity for institutional grace.

Salvation By Faith

Faith and Magic

Salvation, however, may be linked with faith. Insofar as this concept is not identical with submitting to practical norms, it always presupposes some attribution to certain metaphysical truth and some development of "dogmas," the acceptance of which becomes the distinctive hallmark of the belonging of the particular faith. We have already seen that dogmas develop in very different degrees within the various religions. However, some degree of doctrine is the differential mark of prophecy and priestly religion from pure magic. Of course even pure magic requires faith in the magical power of the magician, and, for that matter, first of all, the magician's own faith in himself and his ability. This holds true of every religion, including early Christianity. Thus, Jesus taught his disciples that since they doubted their own ability they could not heal the possessed in demon. Whosoever is completely confident in one's own powers to do a miracle, such faith can move mountains. On the other hand, magic also requires the faith of those who demand a magical miracle, to this very day. So Jesus found himself unable to perform miracles in his birthplace and occasionally in other cities, and "wondered at their disbelief." He repeatedly declared that he was able to heal the crippled and those possessed by demons only through their belief in him and his power. On the other hand, this faith was sublimated in an ethical direction. Thus, because the adulterous woman believed in his power to pardon sins, Jesus was able to forgive her iniquities.

Faith of Islam and Judaism

On the other hand, religious faith developed into an affirmation of intellectual propositions which were products of rationalization, and this is our primary concern here. Accordingly, Confucianism, which knows nothing of dogma, is not an ethic of salvation. In ancient Islam and ancient Judaism, religion made no real demands of dogma, requiring only, as primeval religion does everywhere, belief in the power (and hence also in the existence) of its own god, now regarded by it as the "only" god, and in the mission of the prophets. But since both these

religions were scriptural (in Islam the Koran was believed to have been divinely created), the contents of the scripture must be always validated as divine inspired.

Yet, apart from their cosmological, mythological, and historical narratives, the biblical books of the law and the prophets and the Koran contain primarily practical commandments and do not inherently require intellectual understanding of a definite kind.

Non-prophetic Faith

Only the non-prophetic religions know faith as mere sacred knowledge. In these religions the priests are still, like the magicians, guardians of mythological and cosmological knowledge; and as sacred bards they are also custodians of the heroic sagas. The Vedic and Confucian ethics attributed full moral qualification to the traditional literary educations obtained through schooling which, by and large, was identical with mere mood-like knowledge. The requirement of intellectual "understanding" is easily transformed to the philosophical or gnostic form of salvation. This transformation, however, produces a tremendous gap between the fully qualified intellectuals and the masses. But even at this point there is still no real, official "dogmatics," only philosophical opinions like more or less orthodox Vedanta or heterodox Sankhya in Hinduism.

Dogmatic Faith

On the contrary, as a consequence of the increasing intrusion of intellectualism and the growing opposition to it, the Christian churches produced an unexampled mass of official and binding rational dogmas, a theological faith. In practice it is impossible to require both understanding and faith in dogma universally. It is difficult for us today to imagine that a religious community composed principally of small citizens could have thoroughly mastered and really understood the complicated contents of the Epistle to the Romans, for example, yet apparently this must have been the case. This type of faith related to the views of salvation become always current among the group of urban proselytes who were accustomed to meditating on the conditions of salvation and who were to some degree familiar with Jewish and Greek casuistry. Similarly, it is well known that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries broad small citizen circles achieved intellectual mastery over the dogmas of the Synods of Dordrecht and Westminster, and over the many complicated compromise formulae of the Reformation churches.

Still, under normal conditions it would be impossible for such intellectual penetration to take place in communal religions without producing one of the following results: all those not belonging to the philosophically knowledgeable (gnosis) would be either excluded from salvation or limited to a lesser-rank of salvation for the non-intellectual pious (pistis). These results occurred in Gnosticism and in the intellectual religions of India.

A controversy raged in early Christianity throughout its first centuries, sometimes openly and sometimes latently, as to whether theological knowledge (gnosis) or simple faith (pistis) is the higher religious. The tension inherent in the concept of the transcendent embodied in earthly forms has engaged the attention of philosophers from the beginning of time. The sociology of religion as such, however, is inseparable from the beginnings of sociology as a distinctive discipline. Its early and distinguished practitioners were the founding fathers of sociology itself: Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. Each of these writers was reacting to the economic and social upheavals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, prompted more often than not by the devastating consequences that rapid industrialization had inflicted on the populations of which they were part. The study of religion could hardly be avoided within this framework, for religion was seen as an integral part of the society that appeared to be mutating beyond recognition. Each writer, however, tackled the subject from a different perspective (O'Toole 1984).

Karl Marx (1818-1883) predates the others by at least a generation. There are two essential elements in the Marxist perspective on religion; the first is descriptive, the second evaluative. Marx described religion as a dependent variable; in other words, its form and nature were dependent on social and above all economic relations, which formed the bedrock of social analysis. Nothing could be understood apart from the economic order and the relationship of the capitalist/worker to the means of production. The second aspect follows from this but contains an evaluative element. Religion is a form of alienation; it is a symptom of social malformation that will disappear with the advent of a classless society. Religion cannot therefore be understood apart from the world of which it is part, a crucial dimension of sociological thinking.

Max Weber's (1864-1920) contribution to the sociology of religion spreads into every corner of the discipline. Central to his understanding is the conviction that religion can be constituted as something other than, or separate from, society. Three points follow from this

(Beckford 1989:32): that the relationship between religion and "the world" is contingent and variable, that this relationship can only be examined in its historical and sociocultural specificity, and, third, that the relationship tends to develop in a determinate direction. These three assumptions underpin Weber's magnum opus in the field, his comparative study of the major world faiths and their impact on everyday behavior in different parts of the world. Everyday behavior, moreover, becomes cumulative—hence the social consequences of religious decisions. The precise effect of such decisions is, however, a matter for empirical investigation, not a priori assumption, for religion may legitimate or challenge the prevailing order. A further point follows from this. Religion may cease to have the effects that it previously had, opening the possibility of the decline of religious influence within any given society, the process known as secularization.

Émile Durkheim (1858-1917)—the exact contemporary of Weber—began from a very different position. Working outward from his study of totemic religion among Australian Aborigines, he became convinced of the binding qualities of religion: "Religion celebrates, and thereby, reinforces, the fact that people can form societies" (Beckford 1989:25). What then will happen when time-honored forms of society begin to mutate so rapidly that traditional forms of religion inevitably collapse? Durkheim responded as follows: The religious aspects of society should also be allowed to evolve, so that the symbols of solidarity appropriate to the developing social order (in this case, incipient industrial society) may emerge. The theoretical position runs parallel: Religion as such will always be present for it performs a necessary function. The precise nature of that religion will, however, differ not only over time but between one society and another.

Despite their differences, the founding fathers acknowledged the centrality of religion to human endeavor. Motivated by the shift from preindustrial to industrial society, they wrestled with the place of religion in the changing social order. The sociology of religion was off to an excellent start—an excellence, however, that was difficult to maintain.

Chapter - 10

American Initiatives

Indeed, almost half a century passed before a second wave of activity took place. It came, moreover, from a very different quarter, from within the churches themselves. Such activity took different forms on different sides of the Atlantic. In the United States, where religious institutions remained relatively buoyant and where religious practice continued to grow, sociologists of religion in the early twentieth century were, very largely, motivated by and concerned with the Social Gospel. A second theme ran parallel, one in which religion became increasingly associated with the social divisions of American society. H. Richard Niebuhr's *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Holt 1929) and rather later Jay Demerath's *Social Class in American Protestantism* (Rand McNally 1965) are titles that represent this trend.

By the 1950s and 1960s, however, the principal focus of American sociology lay in the normative functionalism of Talcott Parsons, who stressed above everything the integrative role of religion. Religion—a functional prerequisite—was central to the complex models of social systems and social action elaborated by Parsons. His influence was lasting; it can be seen in subsequent generations of American scholars, notably Robert Bellah. The relationship with American society is also important. The functionalism of Parsons emerged from a social order entirely different from the turbulence that motivated the founding fathers; postwar America symbolized a settled period of industrialism in which consensus appeared not only desirable but possible. The assumption that the social order should be underpinned by religious values was widespread.

Such optimism did not last. As the 1960s gave way to a far less confident decade, the sociology of religion shifted once again—this time to the social construction of meaning systems epitomized by the work of Berger and Luckmann. The Parsonian model is inverted; social order exists but it is constructed from below. The later 1970s merge into the modern period, a world in which conflict—including religious conflict—rather than consensus dominates the agenda (Beckford 1989:8-13). Religion has become increasingly contentious.

From *Sociologie Religieuse* to the Sociology of Religion

In Western Europe, the sociology of religion was evolving along very different lines. Religious institutions on the European side of the Atlantic were far from buoyant, a situation displayed in the titles published in France in the early years of the war. The most celebrated of these, Godin and Daniel's *La France, pays de mission* (Cerf 1943), illustrates the mood of a growing group within French Catholicism who were increasingly worried by the weakening position of the church in French society. Anxiety proved, however, a powerful motivator. So that the situation might be remedied, accurate information was essential; hence a whole series of inquiries began under the direction of Gabriel Le Bras with the intention of discovering what exactly characterized the religion of the people, or "lived religion" (*la religion vécue*) as it became known.

Accurate information acquired a momentum of its own, however, which led to certain tensions. There were those, in France and elsewhere, whose work remained motivated by pastoral concern; there were others who felt that knowledge was valuable for its own sake and resented the ties to the Catholic Church. What emerged in due course was an independent section within the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, the Groupe de Sociologie des Religions. The change in title was significant. There was, however, continuity as well as change. The initial enthusiasm for mapping, for example, which began with Boulard and Le Bras on rural Catholicism (1947), and continued through the work of Boulard and Rémy on urban France (1968), culminated in the magnificent *Atlas de la pratique religieuse des catholiques en France* by Isambert and Terrenoire (FNSP-CNRS 1980). Alongside such cartographic successes developed explanations for the geographic differences that emerged. These explanations were primarily historical; their sources lay deep within regional cultures. There was nothing superficial about this analysis that could, quite clearly, be applied to religions other than Catholicism.

Willaime (1995:37-57) tells this primarily French (or more accurately francophone) story in more detail: that is, the emergence of accurate and careful documentation motivated primarily by pastoral concerns, the establishment of the Groupe de Sociologie des Religions in Paris in 1954, the gradual extension of the subject matter beyond Catholicism, the development of a distinctive sociology of Protestantism, the methodological problems encountered along the way, and finally the emergence of an international organization and the déconfessionalisation of the sociology of

religion. The evolution of the *Conférence Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse*, founded in Leuven in 1948, through the *Conférence Internationale de Sociologie des Religions* (1981) to the present *Société Internationale de Sociologie des Religions* (1989) epitomizes this story. It marks a shift from a group primarily motivated by religion to one that is motivated by science. It is, however, a story that emerges—and could only emerge—from a particular part of the world, Catholic Europe. Such initiatives have been crucial to the development of the sociology of religion; they lead, however, to preoccupations that are not always shared by scholars from other parts of the world.

Themes and Perspectives

Summarizing the issues that predominate within the sociology of religion is a difficult task, for it is almost impossible to do justice to the diversity within the discipline. The increasing and welcome internationalization of the sociology of religion in the last two decades simply makes the task more difficult. The following sections should be seen as representative rather than exhaustive, and each may be explored in greater detail separately within this encyclopedia.

Definitions : Definitions of religion are both crucial and infinitely problematic. There are two aspects to this question. First, what do we mean by religion? And, it inevitably follows, how do we limit the sociology of religion to anything approximating a commonly agreed agenda?

The debate goes back to the founding fathers, to, that is, the primarily Weberian emphasis on the substantive definition (what religion is) versus a primarily Durkheimian functionalism (what religion does). It is a debate that continues today. The most recent attempt to square the circle can be found in the work of Hervieu-Léger (1993), who endeavors to integrate the best of both emphases through the concept of religious memory. The specificity of religion lies in a particular mode of believing, in which the idea of a chain of memory is crucial. Religion becomes therefore "the ideological, symbolic and social device by which the individual and collective awareness of belonging to a particular lineage of believers is created, maintained, developed and controlled" (in Davie 1996:110). The aim is to include more than the beliefs and practices of universally acknowledged world faiths but to avoid widening the agenda so far that it is difficult to distinguish the specifically religious from any other meaning system.

Secularization : The links between definitions of religion and the ongoing debate about secularization are obvious. Those who see religion primarily in substantive terms are more likely to argue that Western society is becoming increasingly secular, for what they perceive as religion is diminishing in a way that can be convincingly measured. Bruce (1995a) is a formidable exponent of this approach. Those, on the other hand, who see religion in functional terms will be less convinced, for they will want to include within the definition a set of phenomena that at the very least meet the Durkheimian description of the sacred; these show a far greater degree of resilience. One point is immediately clear. Secularization is a debate by Western scholars about Western society. A second assumption very frequently follows, namely, that the tendencies that characterize Western (and more often than not European) societies today will, necessarily, occur in other parts of the world tomorrow. Such a view is increasingly challenged. A further limitation is historical rather than geographical; secularization almost always has been explored in relation to the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (hence, among other things, the interest of the founding fathers in this question). The debate about advanced industrial society is only just beginning.

Secularization is sometimes referred to as a theory. It is probably more accurate to describe it as an organizing principle. As such, it has, no doubt, provided an effective way forward, a framework in which to consider a wide range of ideas and information about religion in modern societies. Wallis and Bruce (1989), for example, use this theme to order their review of the British contribution to the sociology of religion. In so doing, they are right to recall the exacting nature of the task; secularization is a complex, nuanced, and at times contradictory field of study (Martin 1978, Wilson 1982). At its best, it is highly illuminating; at its worst, it becomes an ill-disguised cover for ideological secularism.

Dimensions of religiosity : A related discussion—admirably illustrated by the work of Dobbelaere (1981) and Casanova (1994)—concerns the different dimensions of religiosity. The idea of secularization is inevitably complicated by the fact that some aspects of religious life may prosper while others decline. The indicators do not necessarily move in the same direction. At this point, the comparison between Europe and the United States provides an important illustration, for the rigorously secular nature of the American Constitution contrasts with the church-state connections still dominant—although considerably more muted than they were

historically—in Europe. Conversely, religious activity is far more evident in the United States than in almost all European societies. How evident is disputed (Hadaway et al. 1993), but the contrasts with Europe remain whatever the case.

In Europe, the discussion relating to dimensions of religiosity takes a different form. The principal feature of the late twentieth century appears to be the persistence of the softer indicators of religious life (i.e., those concerned with feelings, experience, and the more numinous religious beliefs) alongside the undeniable and at times dramatic drop in the hard indicators (those that measure religious orthodoxy, ritual participation, and institutional attachment). These are the findings of the European Values Study, an invaluable source of empirical information for a growing number of societies (Barker et al. 1993).

Civil religion : The debate about civil religion is associated above all with the work of Robert Bellah. "Civil Religion in America" (1967) became a seminal article that drew attention to the peculiar mix of transcendental religion and national preoccupations that characterized the belief systems of most Americans. The British equivalent takes a different form; it is epitomized in the sacredness that surrounds the royal family (a sacredness somewhat tarnished by the younger generation of royals, but still intact). The French case has evolved rather differently; it is a version of civil religion in which the concept of *laïcité* replaces the transcendent. The transfer of power from one French president to another is a strictly godless ceremony.

An interesting development of this thinking can be found in the evolution of European identity. If Europe is to function effectively as a unit, it will—it can be argued—require its own civil religion, complete with flag, anthem, and belief system. It is paradoxical that a continent that has, very largely, ceased to practice its historic faith, appeals to this heritage once again to define its borders.

New religious movements and the New Age : There remains a persistent paradox within the material available to the sociology of religion, for we know, sociologically at least, considerably more about new religious movements than we do about the beliefs and practices of the great majority within many populations. Or, to put the same point in a more positive way, there is an important and growing body of material on sects, cults, and new religious movements carried by some of the most distinguished writers scholars in the field (Barker, Beckford, Dobbelaere,

Richardson, Wallis, and Wilson, to name but the most obvious). The contribution of Japanese sociologists in this area also should be noted. Material on new religious movements has frequently dominated the journals. This is surprising in view of the relatively small numbers of people involved in such movements but less surprising in view of the issues raised by the presence of new religions in contemporary society, notably the question of religious toleration. It is worth noting that the legal aspects of these issues very often return to problems of definition; disputes about what precisely constitutes a "real" religion are as intractable in court as they are in sociological debate.

One form of new religious life has acquired the title "New Age." New Age religion constitutes a rich amalgam of philosophies and practices from both Eastern and Western traditions. Its significance lies in its affirmation of the sacred in contemporary society but in far from conventional forms. It is often associated with the approach of a new millennium (Heelas 1996).

Fundamentalisms : Strikingly different and at last an aspect of sociology less dominated by the West, the emergence of fundamentalisms worldwide has demanded sociological attention. The interest has been considerable, epitomized in the massively financed Fundamentalism Project at the University of Chicago, from which, eventually, six volumes will appear, covering not only diverse aspects of fundamentalism itself but detailed empirical studies from every world faith and almost every part of the globe. "The project tests the hypothesis that there are 'family resemblances' among disparate movements of religiously inspired reaction to global processes of modernization and secularization in the 20th century" (Marty and Appleby 1993:2). In other words, it looks for the common features in widely diverse fundamentalist movements. One way forward in this enterprise lies in constructing a Weberian ideal-type, a methodological influence from the founding fathers that still resonates. In terms of content, the agenda, once again, is being driven by the impact of world events, notably the spread of fundamentalist movements in recent decades. Explanations are sought, very frequently, in discussions of globalization and in the nature of late capitalism. Wider discussions of the globalization theme can be found in Roland Robertson's (1992) and Peter Beyer's (1994) work.

Religion and the everyday : An alternative and much more recent focus draws from a different line of sociological thinking. It concerns the significance of religion in everyday life, not least its impact upon the basics of human existence and the relationship of humanity to the environment.

All religions have something to say about the body and about nature—diet, sex, sexuality, health, healing, death, even martyrdom (to name but some features of this debate) all lie within the remit of religious control and religious teaching. In opening up this debate, the 23rd Conference of the SISR (Québec 1995) significantly enlarged the agenda of the sociology of religion, not least in encouraging a new set of links with related branches of sociology. At the same time, the conference reaffirmed the importance of anthropological contributions to the sociology of religion (Turner 1974, Douglas 1973, 1978).

One aspect of a renewed emphasis on the importance of religion in everyday life can be found in work on gender and religion. A crucial question, for example, surrounds the issue of whether women are more religious than men because of what they are or because of what they do . Within the Western context, there is persuasive evidence that women display a greater degree of religiousness than men—in practice, in strength of belief, and in what they believe. Why this is so and whether the situation is likely to alter has become the subject of considerable sociological debate—the more so in view of the history of the Western church as a profoundly patriarchal institution within which women have been systematically excluded from positions of responsibility. A second question follows: As women become increasingly involved in the leadership of at least the Protestant churches, is their presence likely to influence not only the institutions themselves but the nature of the message that they are called to proclaim?

Current Dilemmas

Imbalances: Imbalances prosper within the sociology of religion. One of these has already been mentioned. Sociologists know far more about the exotic edges of religious life than they do about the beliefs of ordinary people. Or, to put the same point in a different way, the edges of the religious jigsaw are far more adequately defined than the picture in the middle, which at times remains alarmingly blurred. Nobody would deny that the edges throw up interesting questions—maybe the most interesting—but the lack of information about the center is hardly reassuring. Explanations for this lack derive, at least in part, from a preoccupation with secularization. Sociologists have assumed that the picture in the middle of the puzzle is blurred because it is fading away. It is true that certain aspects of religious life show a marked decline in Western societies; we need to know why this is so. Other aspects, however, do not, and why not is an

equally important question. Non-Western societies, moreover, demonstrate markedly different religious evolutions.

The imbalance needs therefore to be tackled in two ways. On the one hand, there is a need to refocus attention on the middle of the Western picture, following, for example, the work of Roof (1993) and Roof and McKinney (1987). At the same time, the subdiscipline needs to escape from the assumption that the West is necessarily leading the way. Why, for example, do we look from Latin Europe toward Latin America and not the other way around? The following citation from Martin (1996:41 f) makes precisely this point with admirable clarity:

Initially, about a quarter of a century ago, I asked myself why the voluntary denominations of Anglo-American cultures had not taken off in Latin America as they had in the U.S.A., and concluded that Latin America must be too similar to Latin Europe for that to happen. But I am now inclined to reverse the question and ask why the burgeoning denominations of Latin America have not taken off in Latin Europe. After all, the conditions which gave both Latin America and Latin Europe their specific character over the last two centuries have largely disappeared, and the old emplacements of "fortress Catholicism" or militant secularity are not what they were. There are new spaces being cleared in which a competitive denominational culture can emerge.

Isolation and insulation from mainstream sociology : Beckford (1989) has underlined both the insulation and the isolation of the sociology of religion from the parent discipline. Both partners have been impoverished as a result. The sociology of religion has lost the stimulus of theoretical developments within sociology; mainline sociologists continue to assume that religion is of marginal interest in contemporary society. Is it possible to escape from this dilemma? The following are tentative suggestions.

Theoretical possibilities : The sociology of religion has, very largely, become trapped in the discussions that concern the shift from preindustrial to industrial societies. The debate needs to move on. Building on to the best of the contributions concerning the nature and forms of modernity (Giddens, Beck, Baumann, and so on), those with appropriate skills need to offer alternative analyses that integrate rather than marginalize the role of religion in the modern world (Beckford 1996). Hervieu-Léger (1986, 1993) has made a significant start in this direction,

recognizing that the nature and forms of religion at the turn of a new century depend significantly on the nature of modernity itself. Contemporary religion is a product of, not a reaction to, modernity.

A second possibility might pursue an idea already suggested by Beckford: the proposition that religion should be seen as a cultural resource, not as a social institution. The deregulation of religion presents a fresh set of opportunities, for the religious sphere itself and for those who study it.

A third and entirely different opening lies in the exploration of rational choice theory. Stark and Bainbridge, Iannaccone, Pettersson, and Hamburg have presented a supply-side model of religion. Bruce (1995b) summarizes this debate. The model supposes, first, that a free market is more efficient than a monopoly and, second, that this is as true for the production and consumption of religion as it is for anything else. It follows that European religion would flourish if the free market were allowed to operate as it does in the United States. Others, notably Bruce himself, have rebutted this argument strongly.

The focus on new religious movements has, at times, led to extreme forms of marginalization within the sociology of religion. Paradoxically, it can also provide a route back into the discipline—the more so since the upsurge of sociological interest in social movement analysis. Not all those interested in this field are necessarily aware of the religious dimension. The links, however, should be pursued by those who are, for social movements prosper in the late twentieth century. Equally related to the developments of secular society are the separate evolutions of religious belief and religious belonging (Davie 1994), a divergence evident in multiple aspects of social life. It can be exemplified in the decline of large-scale political parties, in the demise of trade unions, and in the mutation of leisure activities. Changes in religious life should be seen against this background. Explanations may lie in societal rather than religious change. All belief systems, after all, present similar problems of credibility. In a celebrated essay on the environment, the anthropologist Mary Douglas (1975) makes precisely this point.

Substantive suggestions : A second set of possibilities can be discovered in the evolving subject matter of sociology. Three examples are given here.

First is the rapidly developing interest in the sociology of health. Traditional constructions of the history of medical care have emphasized its growing separation from the influence of religion in modern, technological society. Postmodern emphases—and here the controversial term is entirely appropriate—reintegrate the two, minimizing the boundaries between body, mind, and soul, for health is a reflection of wholeness rather than fragmentation.

A second example can be found in the sociology of law as the legal rights of religious minorities begin to assert themselves in increasingly pluralist societies. Here comparative analysis is essential to display the influence of context on these interrelationships. To which court, for example, is a case about toleration brought? This will vary from country to country. On what grounds is the case argued? By whom? In which court is the final judgment made? The final question is particularly apposite in Europe, or indeed in any federal framework, as national and supranational interests stake out their relative positions. The work of Richardson (qualified in both law and sociology) makes an excellent start in this area.

A third overlap involves political science. It is true that the conventional patterns of religio-political allegiance have diminished, particularly in Europe. It is not true, however, that religion is no longer a political issue. Indeed, its potency is asserting itself on a global scale, at times associated with extreme violence. Political divisions can become dangerous confrontations when reinforced by religious ideologies. Attempts to understand them better require the cooperation of scholars from a diversity of disciplines.

A demanding agenda awaits the sociologist of religion at the turn of the twenty-first century. Drawing on the widest possible range of sources, theoretical as well as empirical, he or she must rise to the challenge. Religion must become once more an integral part of the discipline of sociology.

Chapter - 11

Organizations and Journals

The International Society for the Sociology of Religion has already been mentioned. It evolved from Conférence Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse. Its origins lie in the sociologie religieuse of Catholic Europe. Bit by bit, however, it has shed such emphases to become a truly global society encouraging a diversity of trends within the sociology of religion (see *Social Compass* , 1990, No. 1). It mails regularly to up to 700 individuals in more than 40 countries. Approximately 300 scholars attended the 1995 meeting in Québec. Research Committee 22 of the International Sociological Association provides a second international forum, an excellent launching pad for establishing creative links with mainline sociology.

National organizations for the sociology of religion exist in a number of countries; the three American groups are the largest, each supporting an independent journal. (The Association for the Sociology of Religion publishes *Sociology of Religion* , formerly *Sociological Analysis* ; the Religious Research Association publishes the *Review of Religious Research* ; and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion publishes the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* .)

There are two European journals. *Social Compass* , which grew from Dutch origins, is now edited in Louvain-la-Neuve. Since 1989, it has been published by Sage; it has developed close links with the SISR, who provide material for the first issue of each year. *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* is edited in Paris. It too has changed its name in the course of its history. It is a production of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, currently edited jointly with the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.

Sociological Theories of Religion

The ideas of three early sociological theorists continue to strongly influence the sociology of religion: Durkheim, Weber, and Marx.

Even though none of these three men was particularly religious, the power that religion holds over people and societies interested them all. They believed that religion is essentially an illusion; because culture and location influence religion to such a degree, the idea that religion

presents a fundamental truth of existence seemed rather improbable to them. They also speculated that, in time, the appeal and influence of religion on the modern mind would lessen.

Durkheim and functionalism

Emile Durkheim, the founder of functionalism, spent much of his academic career studying religions, especially those of small societies. The totemism, or primitive kinship system of Australian aborigines as an “elementary” form of religion, primarily interested him. This research formed the basis of Durkheim's 1921 book, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, which is certainly the best-known study on the sociology of religion. Durkheim viewed religion within the context of the entire society and acknowledged its place in influencing the thinking and behavior of the members of society.

Durkheim found that people tend to separate religious symbols, objects, and rituals, which are sacred, from the daily symbols, objects, and routines of existence referred to as the profane. Sacred objects are often believed to have divine properties that separate them from profane objects. Even in more-advanced cultures, people still view sacred objects with a sense of reverence and awe, even if they do not believe that the objects have some special power.

Durkheim also argued that religion never concerns only belief, but also encompasses regular rituals and ceremonies on the part of a group of believers, who then develop and strengthen a sense of group solidarity. Rituals are necessary to bind together the members of a religious group, and they allow individuals to escape from the mundane aspects of daily life into higher realms of experience. Sacred rituals and ceremonies are especially important for marking occasions such as births, marriages, times of crisis, and deaths.

Durkheim's theory of religion exemplifies how functionalists examine sociological phenomena. According to Durkheim, people see religion as contributing to the health and continuation of society in general. Thus, religion functions to bind society's members by prompting them to affirm their common values and beliefs on a regular basis.

Durkheim predicted that religion's influence would decrease as society modernizes. He believed that scientific thinking would likely replace religious thinking, with people giving only minimal attention to rituals and ceremonies. He also considered the concept of “God” to be on the verge

of extinction. Instead, he envisioned society as promoting civil religion, in which, for example, civic celebrations, parades, and patriotism take the place of church services. If traditional religion were to continue, however, he believed it would do so only as a means to preserve social cohesion and order.

Weber and social change

Durkheim claimed that his theory applied to religion in general, yet he based his conclusions on a limited set of examples. Max Weber, on the other hand, initiated a large-scale study of religions around the globe. His principal interest was in large, global religions with millions of believers. He conducted in-depth studies of Ancient Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904/1958), Weber examined the impact of Christianity on Western thinking and culture.

The fundamental purpose of Weber's research was to discover religion's impact on social change. For example, in Protestantism, especially the "Protestant Work Ethic," Weber saw the roots of capitalism. In the Eastern religions, Weber saw barriers to capitalism. For example, Hinduism stresses attaining higher levels of spirituality by escaping from the toils of the mundane physical world. Such a perspective does not easily lend itself to making and spending money.

To Weber, Christianity was a salvation religion that claims people can be "saved" when they convert to certain beliefs and moral codes. In Christianity, the idea of "sin" and its atonement by God's grace plays a fundamental role. Unlike the Eastern religions' passive approach, salvation religions like Christianity are active, demanding continuous struggles against sin and the negative aspects of society.

Marx: Conflict theory

Despite his influence on the topic, Karl Marx was not religious and never made a detailed study of religion. Marx's views on the sociology of religion came from 19th century philosophical and theological authors such as Ludwig Feuerbach, who wrote *The Essence of Christianity* (1841). Feuerbach maintained that people do not understand society, so they project their own culturally based norms and values onto separate entities such as gods, spirits, angels, and demons.

According to Feuerbach, after humans realize that they have projected their own values onto religion, they can achieve these values in this world rather than in an afterlife.

Marx once declared that religion is the “opium of the people.” He viewed religion as teaching people to accept their current lot in life, no matter how bad, while postponing rewards and happiness to some afterlife. Religion, then, prohibits social change by teaching nonresistance to oppression, diverting people's attention away from worldly injustices, justifying inequalities of power and wealth for the privileged, and emphasizing rewards yet to come.

Although people commonly assume that Marx saw no place for religion, this assumption is not entirely true. Marx held that religion served as a sanctuary from the harshness of everyday life and oppression by the powerful. Still, he predicted that traditional religion would one day pass away.

Introduction

Sociologists study religion the same way they study other social institutions, like education or government. The aim is primarily to understand religions, but included in trying to understand religions is the aim of trying to predict what religions will eventually do (or what will become of religions). To do this, sociologists employ demographic techniques, survey analysis, ethnography, and various other methodological approaches. It is important to note at the beginning of this chapter that sociologists study religion not to prove, disprove or normatively evaluate religion. Sociologists aren't interested in whether a religion is right or wrong. This requires sociologists to assume a relativistic perspective that basically takes a neutral stance toward issues of right or wrong or true or false. That said, the social scientific study of religion can be challenging from a faith standpoint as it provides alternative, naturalistic explanations for many elements of religion (e.g., the sources of conversion experiences).

Definitions of Religion

The starting point for any study of religion should begin with a definition of the concept. This is particularly important in the study of religion because the definition determines which groups will be included in the analysis. Three general definitions have been proposed, each of which will be discussed briefly. Each definition has its merits and detriments, but what one often finds

is that the definition of religion employed by a particular researcher or in the investigation of a particular topic depends on the question being asked.

Sacred vs. Profane

Perhaps the most well known definition of religion is that provided by Emile Durkheim. Durkheim argued that the definition of religion hinged on the distinction between things that are sacred (set apart from daily life) and things that are profane (everyday, mundane elements of society). The sacred elements of social life are what make up religion.

For example, the Torah in Judaism is sacred and treated with reverence and respect. The reverential treatment of the Torah would be contrasted with all sorts of more mundane things like cars or toys, which, for most people, are not considered sacred. Yet, the acute reader will be quick to point out that for some, cars (and even toys) are considered sacred and treated almost as reverentially as the Torah is treated in Judaism. This introduces one of the most significant criticisms of this definition - the typology can include things that are not traditionally understood to be religious (like cars or toys). As a result, the definition is extremely broad and can encompass substantial elements of social life. For instance, while most people in the United States would not consider their nationalism to be religious, they do hold the flag, the nation's capitol, and other national monuments to be sacred. Under this definition, nationalism would be considered religion.

Religion as Existential Questioning

Another definition of religion among social scientists (particularly social psychologists) views religion as any attempt to answer existential questions (e.g., 'Is there life after death?'). This definition casts religion in a functional light as it is seen as serving a specific purpose in society. As is the case with the sacred/profane typology, this definition is also often critiqued for being broad and overly encompassing. For instance, using this definition, someone who attends religious services weekly but makes no attempt to answer existential questions would not be considered religious. At the other extreme, an atheist who believes that existence ends with physical death, would be considered religious because he/she has attempted to answer a key existential question.

Religion as Supernature

The third social scientific definition views religion as the collective beliefs and rituals of a group relating to supernature. This view of religion draws a sometimes ambiguous line between beliefs and rituals relating to empirical, definable phenomena and those relating to undefinable or unobservable phenomena, such as spirits, god(s), and angels. This definition is not without its problems as well, as some argue it can also include atheists who have a specific position against the existence of a god (or gods). Yet because the beliefs and rituals are understood to be shared by a group, this definition could be argued to exclude atheists. Despite the problems with this last definition, it does most closely adhere to the traditional (and popular) view of what constitutes a religion.

The Church-Sect Typology

Having defined religion, we now move to one of the most common classification schemes employed in sociology for differentiating between different types of religions. This scheme has its origins in the work of Max Weber, but has seen numerous contributions since then. The basic idea is that there is a continuum along which religions fall, ranging from the protest-like orientation of sects to the equilibrium maintaining churches. Along this continuum are several additional types, each of which will be discussed in turn. The reader may notice that many of the labels for the types of religion are commonly employed by non-sociologists to refer to religions and tend to be used interchangeably. Sociologists, when speaking technically, will not use these labels interchangeably as they are designations for religions with very specific characteristics.

Before describing these different religions, it is important for the reader to understand that these classifications are a good example of what sociologists refer to as ideal types. Ideal types are pure examples of the categories. Because there is significant variation in each religion, how closely an individual religion actually adheres to their ideal type classification will vary. Even so, the classification scheme is useful as it also outlines a sort of developmental process for religions

Chapter - 12

Church and Ecclesia

The first type of religion is the church. The church classification describes religions that are all-embracing of religious expression in a society. Religions of this type are the guardians of religion for all members of the societies in which they are located and tolerate no religious competition. They also strive to provide an all-encompassing worldview for their adherents and are typically enmeshed with the political and economic structures of society.

Johnstone provides the following seven characteristics of churches:

1. claim universality, include all members of the society within their ranks, and have a strong tendency to equate 'citizenship' with 'membership'
2. exercise religious monopoly and try to eliminate religious competition
3. very closely allied with the state and secular powers - frequently there is overlapping of responsibilities and much mutual reinforcement
4. extensively organized as a hierarchical bureaucratic institution with a complex division of labor
5. employ professional, full-time clergy who possess the appropriate credentials of education and formal ordination
6. almost by definition gain new members through natural reproduction and the socialization of children into the ranks
7. allow for diversity by creating different groups within the church (e.g., orders of nuns or monks) rather than through the formation of new religions

The classical example of a church is the Roman Catholic Church, especially in the past. Today, the Roman Catholic Church has been forced into the denomination category because of religious pluralism or competition among religions. This is especially true of Catholicism in the United

States. The change from a church to a denomination is still underway in many Latin American countries where the majority of citizens remain Catholics.

A slight modification of the church type is that of ecclesia. Ecclesias include the above characteristics of churches with the exception that they are generally less successful at garnering absolute adherence among all of the members of the society and are not the sole religious body. The state churches of some European countries would fit this type.

Denominations

The denomination lies between the church and the sect on the continuum. Denominations come into existence when churches lose their religious monopoly in a society. A denomination is one religion among many. When churches and/or sects become denominations, there are also some changes in their characteristics. Johnstone provides the following eight characteristics of denominations:

1. similar to churches, but unlike sects, in being on relatively good terms with the state and secular powers and may even attempt to influence government at times
2. maintain at least tolerant and usually fairly friendly relationships with other denominations in a context of religious pluralism
3. rely primarily on birth for membership increase, though it will also accept converts; some even actively pursue evangelization
4. accept the principle of at least modestly changing doctrine and practice and tolerate some theological diversity and dispute
5. follow a fairly routinized ritual and worship service that explicitly discourages spontaneous emotional expression
6. train and employ professional clergy who must meet formal requirements for certification
7. accept less extensive involvement from members than do sects, but more involvement than churches
8. often draw disproportionately from the middle and upper classes of society

Most of the major religious bodies in the U.S. are denominations (e.g., Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans).

Sects

Sects are newly formed religious groups that form to protest elements of their parent religion (generally a denomination). Their motivation tends to be situated in accusations of apostasy or heresy in the parent denomination; they are often decrying liberal trends in denominational development and advocating a return to true religion.

Interestingly, leaders of sectarian movements (i.e., the formation of a new sect) tend to come from a lower socio-economic class than the members of the parent denomination, a component of sect development that is not entirely understood. Most scholars believe that when sect formation does involve social class distinctions they involve an attempt to compensate for deficiencies in lower social status. An often seen result of such factors is the incorporation into the theology of the new sect a distaste for the adornments of the wealthy (e.g., jewelry or other signs of wealth).

Another interesting fact about sects is that after their formation, they can take only three paths - dissolution, institutionalization, or eventual development into a denomination. If the sect withers in membership, it will dissolve. If the membership increases, the sect is forced to adopt the characteristics of denominations in order to maintain order (e.g., bureaucracy, explicit doctrine, etc.). And even if the membership does not grow or grows slowly, norms will develop to govern group activities and behavior. The development of norms results in a decrease in spontaneity, which is often one of the primary attractions of sects. The adoption of denomination-like characteristics can either turn the sect into a full-blown denomination or, if a conscious effort is made to maintain some of the spontaneity and protest components of sects, an institutionalized sect can result. Institutionalized sects are halfway between sects and denominations on the continuum of religious development. They have a mixture of sect-like and denomination-like characteristics. Examples include: Hutterites and the Amish.

Most of the well-known denominations of the U.S. existing today originated as sects breaking away from denominations (or Churches, in the case of Lutheranism). Examples include: Methodists, Baptists, and Seventh-day Adventists.

Cults or New Religious Movements

Cults are, like sects, new religious groups. But, unlike sects, they can form without breaking off from another religious group (though they often do). The characteristic that most distinguishes cults from sects is that they are not advocating a return to pure religion but rather the embracement of something new or something that has been completely lost or forgotten (e.g., lost scripture or new prophecy). Cults are also more likely to be led by charismatic leaders than are other religious groups and the charismatic leaders tend to be the individuals who bring forth the new or lost component that is the focal element of the cult. Falun Gong practitioners in London; Falun Gong is a new religious movement.

Cults, like sects, often integrate elements of existing religious theologies, but cults tend to create more esoteric theologies from many sources. Cults emphasize the individual and individual peace. Cults also tend to attract the socially disenchanted or unattached (though this isn't always the case; see Aho 1990 and Barker 1984). Cults tend to be located in urban centers where they can draw upon large populations for membership. Finally, cults tend to be transitory as they often dissolve upon the death or discrediting of their founder and charismatic leader.

Cults, like sects, can develop into denominations. As cults grow, they bureaucratize and develop many of the characteristics of denominations. Some scholars are hesitant to grant cults denominational status because many cults maintain their more esoteric characteristics (e.g., Temple Worship among Mormons). But given their closer semblance to denominations than to the cult type, it is more accurate to describe them as denominations. Some denominations in the U.S. that began as cults include: Christian Science, and The Nation of Islam.

Finally, it should be noted that there is a push in the social scientific study of religion to begin referring to cults as New Religious Movements or NRMs. The reasoning behind this is because cult has made its way into popular language as a derogatory label rather than as a specific type of religious group. Most religious people would do well to remember the social scientific meaning of the word cult and, in most cases, realize that three of the major world religions originated as cults, including: Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism.

Theories of Religion

Many of the early sociological theorists proposed theories attempting to explain religion. In addition to these classical approaches to understanding religion, one modern explanation for the continued high levels of religiosity will be proposed along with a social psychological explanation that will attempt to explain the continued attraction of religion. These theories approach religion from slightly different perspectives, trying to explain: the function of religion in society; the role of religion in the life of the individual; and the nature (and origin) of religion.

Structural-Functional

The Structural-Functional approach to religion has its roots in Emile Durkheim's work on religion. Durkheim argued that religion is, in a sense, the celebration and even (self-) worship of human society. Given this approach, Durkheim proposed that religion has three major functions in society:

1. **social cohesion** - religion helps maintain social solidarity through shared rituals and beliefs
2. **social control** - religious based morals and norms help maintain conformity and control in society; religion can also legitimize the political system
3. **providing meaning and purpose** - religion can provide answers to existential questions (see the social-psychological approach below)

The primary criticism of the structural-functional approach to religion is that it overlooks religion's dysfunctions. For instance, religion can be used to justify terrorism and violence. Religion has often been the justification of and motivation for war. In one sense, this still fits the structural-functional approach as it provides social cohesion among the members of one party in a conflict (e.g., the social cohesion among the members of a terrorist group is high), but in a broader sense, religion is obviously resulting in conflict, not the resolution of such.

Social-Conflict

The social-conflict approach is rooted in Marx's analysis of capitalism. According to Marx, religion plays a significant role in maintaining the status quo. Marx argued that religion was actually a tool of the bourgeoisie to keep the proletariat content. Marx argued that religion is able

to do this by promising rewards in the after-life rather than in this life. It is in this sense that Marx said, "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless circumstances. It is the opium of the people... The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness". What Marx meant is that it would be necessary for the proletariat to throw off religion and its deceit about other-worldly rewards in order for the proletariat to rise up against the bourgeoisie and gain control over the means of production so they could realize this-worldly rewards. Thus, the social-conflict approach to religion highlights how it functions to maintain social inequality by providing a worldview that justifies oppression.

It should be reiterated here that Marx's approach to sociology was critical in the sense that it advocated change (in contrast to the knowledge for knowledge's sake approach). Because criticism of the system in place when he was writing was inherent in Marx's approach, he took a particular stand on the existence of religion, namely, that it should be done away with.

Social Constructionist

The social constructionist approach to religion presents a naturalistic explanation of the origins of religion. Berger laid a framework for this approach, "Religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established. Put differently, religion is cosmization in a sacred mode. Use of the word sacred in this context refers to a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience". In other words, for the social constructionist, religion is not created by (or for) supernatural beings but rather is the result of societies delineating certain elements of society as sacred. In the social constructionist frame of mind, these elements of society are then objectified in society so they seem to take on an existence of their own. As a result, they can then act back on the individual (e.g., the influence of a religion on the individual).

Another important element of religion discussed by Berger in his outline of the social constructionist approach is the idea of plausibility structures. According to Berger, The reality of the Christian world depends upon the presence of social structures within which this reality is taken for granted and within which successive generations of individuals are socialized in such a way that this world will be real to them. When this plausibility structure loses its intactness or

continuity, the Christian world begins to totter and its reality ceases to impose itself as self-evident truth.

In short, plausibility structures are the societal elements that provide the support for a set of beliefs (not necessarily religious), including people, institutions, and the processes by which the beliefs are spread, e.g. socialization. Another important element to consider of plausibility structures is mentioned by Berger, "When an entire society serves as the plausibility structure for a religiously legitimated world, all the important social processes within it serve to confirm and reconfirm the reality of this world". In other words, in certain societies, every component of society functions to reinforce the belief system. A good example of this may be Iran, where everything is structured to reinforce the Islamic faith as reality.

Religious Pluralism

Religious pluralism is the belief that one can overcome religious differences between different religions and denominational conflicts within the same religion. For most religious traditions, religious pluralism is essentially based on a non-literal view of one's religious traditions, allowing for respect to be engendered between different traditions on core principles rather than more marginal issues. It is perhaps summarized as an attitude which rejects focus on immaterial differences and instead gives respect to those beliefs held in common.

The existence of religious pluralism depends on the existence of freedom of religion. Freedom of religion is when different religions of a particular region possess the same rights of worship and public expression. Freedom of religion is consequently weakened when one religion is given rights or privileges denied to others, as in certain European countries where Roman Catholicism or regional forms of Protestantism have special status. (For example see the Lateran Treaty and Church of England; also, in Saudi Arabia the public practice of religions other than Islam is forbidden.) Religious freedom has not existed at all in some communist countries where the state restricts or prevents the public expression of religious belief and may even actively persecute individual religions (see for example North Korea).

Religious Pluralism has also been argued to be a factor in the continued existence of religion in the U.S. This theoretical approach proposes that because no religion was guaranteed a monopoly in the U.S., religious pluralism led to the conversion of religions in the U.S. into capitalist

organizations. As a result, religions are now better understood as capitalist corporations peddling their wares in a highly competitive market than they are as monopolistic Churches like Roman Catholicism was prior to The Reformation (or, some might argue, still is in Latin America) or as small, fervent, protest-like sects are. The result of religious pluralism is, like capitalism generally in the U.S., a consumer attitude: people consume religion like they do other goods. Because religions are good at marketing themselves as the providers of social psychological compensators (see below), they have been successful.

Social-Psychological

The primary social-psychological reason why religion continues to exist is because it answers existential questions that are difficult, if not impossible, to address scientifically. For instance, science may not be able to address the question of what happens when someone dies other than to provide a biological explanation (i.e., the body's cells eventually die due to lack of nutrition, the body then decomposes, etc.). Science is also unable to address the question of a higher purpose in life other than simply to reproduce. Finally, science cannot disprove or prove the existence of a higher being. Each of these existential components are discussed below in greater detail.

Studies have found that fear is a factor in religious conversion. Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1997), in their book *Amazing Conversions*, note that one of the primary motivations for people to seek religion was fear of the unknown; specifically, fear of the after-life and what it portends. While fear likely does not motivate all religious people, it certainly is a factor for some. Religion can provide a non-falsifiable answer to the question of what happens after people die. Such answers can provide comfort for individuals who want to know what will happen when they die.

Religion providing a purpose in life was also a motivation found by Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1997) in their analysis of religious converts. Batson et. al. and Spilka, Hunsberger, Gorsuch, and Hood also point to this factor as an explanation for the continued interest in religiosity. Interestingly, Diener, in his research on subjective well-being (SWB) notes that one of the keys to high SWB (a.k.a. happiness) is a goal or purpose in life. However, he introduces a caveat that is particularly telling for religious individuals – for the most positive impact on SWB, goals should be difficult but attainable. Difficult but attainable is a good description of salvation for

religious people. People have to work toward salvation, but they believe it can be achieved. Thus, religion can provide a goal and purpose in life for people who believe they need one.

Belief in God is attributable to a combination of the above factors (i.e., God's existence alleviates fear of death and provides meaning), but is also informed by a discussion of socialization. The biggest predictor of adult religiosity is parental religiosity; if a person's parents were religious when he was a child, he is likely to be religious when he grows up. Children are socialized into religion by their parents and their peers and, as a result, they tend to stay in religions. Alternatively, children raised in secular homes tend not to convert to religion. This is the underlying premise of Altemeyer and Hunsberger's (1997) main thesis – they found some interesting cases where just the opposite seemed to happen; secular people converted to religion and religious people became secular. Despite these rare exceptions, the process of socialization is certainly a significant factor in the continued existence of religion.

Combined, these three social-psychological components explain, with the help of religious pluralism, the continued high levels of religiosity in the U.S. People are afraid of things they do not understand (death), they feel they need a purpose in life to be happy (a.k.a. SWB), and they are socialized into religion and believing in God by parents.

World Religions and Religious History

If one were to ask any sociologist of religion which are the world religions, they would likely give the standard answer that there are five world religions:

- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Buddhism
- Judaism

Traditionally, these have been considered world religions due to their size and/or influence on society. A detailed description of these religions is beyond the scope of this chapter and the interested reader is encouraged to follow the above links for more information.

One note is, however, in order concerning these religious groups. The classification of these groups as world religions is, like all classifications, artificial. Considering the remarkable dissimilarity between these five religious bodies, that they are grouped together at all is remarkable. Three are religions of the book and can be practiced somewhat distinctly from one's primary cultural identity (e.g., being an American and Episcopalian), while two are better understood as synonymous with culture (Buddhism and Hinduism). Additionally, the religions of the book have numerous branches, some so dissimilar that there is more contention within the world religions than between them (e.g., Mormons vs. fundamentalist Christians, Catholics vs. Episcopalians). Finally, while four of these religious groups are very populous, Judaism is not. In short, classification as a world religion seems a little arbitrary. Even so, most people should make an effort to familiarize themselves with these religious groups to facilitate understanding.

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