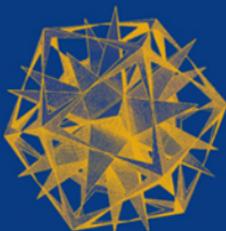


# American Sociology of Religion

Histories

EDITED BY

*Anthony J. Blasi*



RELIGION AND THE SOCIAL ORDER 13

BRILL

# American Sociology of Religion

# Religion and the Social Order

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*General Editor*

William H. Swatos, Jr.

VOLUME 13

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Anthony J. Blasi



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## PREFACE

William H. Swatos, Jr.

In a *Wall Street Journal* “Taste” section article that appeared in the Winter of 2007, commentator Wilfred McClay uses the December 2006 death of Seymour Martin Lipset as an occasion to take stock of the current state of the field of sociology. He sees Marty’s passing as the end of an era, “the discipline of sociology itself may now be ebbing away.”<sup>1</sup> Perhaps he is right, perhaps not. It should in any case not be forgotten that Lipset made important contributions to the sociology of religion, especially in both *Political Man* and *The First New Nation*. Marty was, in fact, among the first rank of post-War empirical sociologists to move beyond the “nothingbuttery” of earlier putatively social “scientific,” actually reductionistic, works to take religion seriously as an independent variable. Not for nothing did volume 1, number 1 of the *Review of Religious Research*, published in the summer of 1959, feature a reprint piece by him in effect to make a claim for its own being: “Religion in America: What Religious Revival?” While never formally a “sociologist of religion,” Seymour Martin Lipset as a sociologist of American life was always sensitive to and appreciative of the role of religion as an independent variable. Much of our work today is built on foundational understandings constructed by him.

“Other than one more historical vignette,” you may be tempted to ask, “what does this have to do with this volume?” Much. Because in his article McClay himself goes on to find one bright spot in the rather dismal picture he paints of American sociology generally:

As it happens, the sociology of religion seems to have escaped the fate of the rest of the discipline: It remains a lively subfield, populated by outstanding figures . . . The social study of religion thrives, perhaps, because it must resist the tyranny of progressivism, the belief that the present is always better than the past, and better off without it. It begins by showing respect for the power of the most primal, even atavistic, elements in

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<sup>1</sup> Wilfred M. McClay, “Twilight of Sociology,” *Wall Street Journal* (2 Feb 2007), p. W13.

human life—the force of authority, the quest for status, the longing for a sacred realm. It cannot wish these things away. . . .

To do so, of course, would be to deny itself. Sociologists may study odd things, but none studies things she or he believes to be irrelevant to the human condition.

The present volume thus takes up the history of sociology of religion in America among its various professional constituencies and subfields. Regrettably not every trajectory possible could be included, yet if one surveys the literatures of the field as represented in our journals, I am convinced that the mainlines across time are encompassed in the collection that Tony has brought us here, and that this volume is a worthy companion to his *Diverse Histories of American Sociology* published by Brill in 2005 in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the American Sociological Association (*nee* American Sociological Society—in a pre-acronym world), and recognized by the History of Sociology section of that organization by its distinguished book award last year.

## INTRODUCTION

Anthony J. Blasi

Why a disciplinary history? Why a history of a specialty within a history? We sociologists have tended to be indifferent to our history, except as a sourcebook of suggestive ideas for our theoretical deliberations. So most of us have read books *about* sociological theories and have read the principal works of the dead European men who published general program statements for our discipline between 1830 (the first volume of Auguste Comte's *Cours de philosophie positive*) and 1922 (the first edition of Max Weber's *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*). Most of us are also likely to have read a few American works out of our disciplinary history—likely George Herbert Mead's posthumous *Mind, Self, and Society* and Talcott Parsons's *The Social System*. While all these books merit careful readings, the fact of the matter is that most of what they have to say is rather remote from our actual research practice. The trajectory of research has been fashioned at the hands of mentors and their students over the decades in a scholarly history that is quite distinct from that represented by the canon of great ideas.

If the theoretical masters enter into our thinking in the sociology of religion, it is by virtue of their works about religion, not by virtue of their theoretical perspectives. Our reading of Émile Durkheim is likely to focus on the book that should have been translated as the *Elemental Forms of the Religious Life*. Max Weber is of interest because of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Karl Marx is interesting because of the opening paragraphs of "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction." Georg Simmel receives little of our attention because those of his works that have been translated that deal with religion are not particularly sociological and those of his translated works that are particularly sociological do not deal with religion. Among the post-World War II theorists, it is largely Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann who have been most influential, but again more or less in isolation from the conduct of inquiry.

So where did our disciplinary, as well as our subdisciplinary, praxis come from? Many an American sociologist has benefited from the masterful analyses of leadership in America conducted by C. Wright

Mills (especially 1956), but Mills did not set out from the theories of European origin (though a few theory texts mistakenly place him in the Marxian camp). He was schooled in American pragmatism, wrote a dissertation in the sociology of knowledge on the American pragmatists (1964), and used the essentially sociological writings of Thorstein Veblen as his point of departure. The trail leads to the Chicago pragmatists. Similarly, when we take up the series of studies of new religions, one must place them in the context of the ethnographic tradition of the Chicago school, represented early on by William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1918–20), whose work was appreciated but criticized by Herbert Blumer (1979 [1939]); Blumer, of course, went on to insist upon theory emerging from people's ethnographically-observed interpretations of the everyday world (Blumer 1969, which includes earlier methodological essays).

The many questionnaire studies in the sociology of religion do not take us to Chicago, but neither do they take us to the European theoretical masters. As with survey research in general, these survey studies, with their nation-wide data sets (the use of which became possible with the advent of the computer), superseded the community study tradition of research as a form of inquiry into the wider society in general (on which see Williams and MacLean 2005). Perhaps the community study most widely cited in the sociology of religion is that undertaken in Muncie, Indiana, by Robert and Helen Lynd in the 1920s (1956), but there were many earlier community studies that focused on religion, not the least of which were those of Harlan Paul Douglass (see Brunner 1959). The Lynds' and Douglass's studies were in fact funded by the Institute of Social and Religious Research and represented some of the most advanced empirical sociology of the day.

Very interesting, but why do we need to know about such matters? I myself once considered the history of sociology as the history of sociological theory, and I tended to think that most that was valuable in American sociology came from symbolic interactionism, which I took to be the "Chicago School." But with the internationalization of our field I and many others have come to observe the contemporary European sociologists who, living in societies having longer written histories, take it for granted that the history of sociological praxis should be studied and written. Luigi Tomasi in particular emphasized the importance of the history of the empirical work conducted at Chicago as well as the theoretical developments there (see 1997: 17–221; 1998). Quite in contrast to what would be considered in the Kantian perspective assumed

by Max Weber to hold successive research endeavors together, what does so is not in the realm of the abstract, in the world of ideal types or Parsons's value complexes (or for that matter, Pitirim Sorokin's), but actual research trajectories. To understand what has gone on behind the research that we read, we must place them in their proper history-of-sociological-research context.

An examination of the actual history of American sociology has begun to yield a narrative that differs markedly from what is often assumed about the field. In the founding circle of the History of Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association—the late Helena Znaniecka Lopata, Mary Jo Deegan, Michael Hill, Susan Hoecker-Drysdale, Patricia Madoo Lengermann, Jill Niebrugge, and many others—there was a definite interest in establishing the record of the early female sociologists, mention of whom had been suppressed. Now we know, for example, that Harriet Martineau belongs in the nineteenth-century European canon, that she wrote the first practical methodology book in the field in 1838 (1989), and that her study of American institutions was far more sociological than the effort of her contemporary, Alexis de Tocqueville. Now we know that in Chicago W.I. Thomas, George Herbert Mead, and John Dewey were participants in a continuous intellectual dialogue with Jane Addams, Alice Chipman Dewey, and Mary MacDowell, among others (see Deegan's introductions to Mead 1999: xix–cxii; 2001: xi–xliv). Beyond feminist concerns, we now know that Mead, often reputed to have been unable to put his thoughts into writing, in fact completed a book that embodies his general theory, but it was stopped at the galley stage for reasons still unknown. The galleys have been found by Deegan and published (Mead 2001). Mead was often thought merely to philosophize, but an examination of his essays written as part of his civic activism reveals the close association between his theory and an applied sociology (Mead 1999). We now know that W.E.B. DuBois did not represent an isolated trend in his research but should be read in the light of William James and the 1895 *Hull-House Maps and Papers*.<sup>1</sup> The recognition of past sociology as being itself a social phenomenon enables us to set forth from something

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<sup>1</sup> Compare “double-consciousness” in the first chapter of *Souls of Black Folk* (DuBois 1986 [1903]: 363ff) with James's discussion of the “I” and the “Me” in his *Psychology* (1982: 189ff). On DuBois and Hull-House, see Deegan (1988). Addams (1990[1910]: 149) refers to DuBois's visit to Hull-House.

more complete than a set of disembodied abstractions. When we see what we are actually doing, we may in fact do it better.

So it has become clear that the history of sociological praxis has important implications for the practice and interpretation of sociological research today, and that establishing that history requires historical research since our disciplinary legends are largely inaccurate. In 2003 the American Sociological Association's Section on the History of Sociology, itself established in only 2000, asked me to edit a volume of works in commemoration of the centenary of the Association. American sociology clearly antedates the founding of the American Sociological Society, as it was first called, but the centenary was a good time to re-examine collectively the history of sociology in America. The resultant volume (Blasi 2005) attracted more attention than any of us expected. The series editor of the Association for the Sociology of Religion's "Religion and the Social Order," William H. Swatos, Jr.—himself personally interested in the history of the sociology of religion (see Swatos 1989)—invited me to undertake the present volume as a follow-up to the centennial reassessments in the A.S.A.

The recovery of our subdisciplinary memory had actually already begun. In Europe, there was a post-World War II interest in preserving the work of Gabriel LeBras; his studies were collected and republished in 1955 and the resultant volume included in the Arno Press reprint series, "European Sociology" (1975).<sup>2</sup> Roger Bastide's 1935 restatement of the Durkheimian approach to religion was republished in the last decade of the twentieth century (1997) and translated into English (2003).<sup>3</sup> The 1989 meeting of the Conférence Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse/International Conference on Sociology of Religion included a retrospective session with papers that are preserved in *Social Compass*, at the start of volume 37 in 1990, when an on-going association with this journal was developed for the purposes of disseminating papers and addresses selected from the meetings.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The "Advisory Editor" for the series was Lewis A. Coser. S.N. Eisenstadt, Robert A. Nisbet, and Erwin Scheuch comprised his editorial board. The 1950s series, "Bibliothèque de Sociologie Contemporaine," was edited by Georges Gurvitch.

<sup>3</sup> I do not know who was responsible for the French republication of what had become an obscure treatise nor who first proposed the English translation; I was brought in as a consultant for the latter in 1997 and again in 2001.

<sup>4</sup> The ICSR was founded as a francophone organization but very soon had native English-speaking attendees, the first perhaps being Paul Hanly Furfey at the third conference in the early 1950s. Certainly by the time it began publishing its *Actes/Acts* in

After this meeting the organization also became known as the *Société Internationale de Sociologie des Religions/International Society for the Sociology of Religion*, with *Conférence/Conference* being restricted to the group's meeting itself. The papers in that issue were an overview of the foundation and changes in the ICSR by Émile Poulat, a survey of the sociology of religion from 1945 to 1989 by James Beckford, and a tracing of the secularization debate in the *Actes/Acts* of the ICSR up to that point by Olivier Tschannen.<sup>5</sup>

In 1997 Roberto Cipriani published a magisterial history of the major figures in the field, focusing largely on European and North American scholars (cf. Cipriani 2000). Also in 1997 Yves Lambert, Guy Michelat, and Albert Piette edited a volume of the personal faith histories and scientific itineraries of prominent continental sociologists of religion, undoubtedly with future retrospective research in mind. The 1999 meeting of the ISSR in Leuven, Belgium, provided the occasion for the presentation of a volume that provided an overview of the relationship between sociology and religion in the context of European sociology of religion (Voyé and Billiet 1999); the volume includes essays by Emmanuel Gerard and Kaat Wils on Catholics and sociology at Leuven, Émile Poulat on the former CISR, Karel Dobbelaere comparing the CISR and the American Catholic Sociological Society, Dobbelaere again on the ISSR replacing the ICSR, Jean Remy on the Catholic Church and Sociology, Roland Campiche on Protestantism and sociology, David Martin on the Church of England and sociology, Vasilios Makrides on sociology of religion in Eastern Orthodox Europe, Régine Azria on Judaism and sociology, Constant Hamès on Islam and sociology, Susumu Shimazono on the study of new religions in Japan, Bryan Wilson on sects and society, and Eileen Barker on new religious movements and sociology. The volume clearly represents a collective attempt to take stock of the field.

While the history of American sociology was coming under a reconsideration, and while the European sociologists of religion, prompted by their specialized professional association undergoing a transition,

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1967, Franco-English bilinguality was the norm. Occasionally sessions have also been held in German or Spanish. Prior to 1967 papers were published in either book or article form as opportunity provided. At the time of the shift to *Social Compass* in 1990, the English title of the *Actes* changed from *Acts* to *Proceedings*. (Personal communication, Karel Dobbelaere, December 2006.)

<sup>5</sup> Also included were responses by François Houtart, Karel Dobbelaere, Erik Allardt, and T.K. Oommen.

were authoring retrospectives, American sociologists of religion were also making reappraisals as their own associations went through transitions and marking anniversaries of their several professional journals. By the late 1960s, leaders in the American Catholic Sociological Society noted that few members thought in terms of a distinct Catholic sociology anymore; they believed the name of their association was anachronistic. They had already decided in 1963 to change the name of their journal to *Sociological Analysis* (Lane 1971: 134). In his presidential address of August 1970, delivered in Washington, DC, Paul J. Reiss traced the evolution of the organization from 1938 by analyzing previous presidential addresses and announced with some satisfaction that his was the final presidential address of the ACSS: the association was changing its name to the Association for the Sociology of Religion. The following year, Ralph Lane used his address to take stock of the status of the sociology of religion.<sup>6</sup> The year 1989 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the *American Catholic Sociological Review/Sociological Analysis*. Volume 50 number 4, organized by editor William H. Swatos, Jr., reproduced, among other items, the 1938 presidential address of Ralph A. Gallagher, S.J., the 1940 inaugural presentation of the *ACSR* by editor Paul J. Mundie, and the 1964 inaugural presentation of *Sociological Analysis* by Paul J. Reiss. Loretta Morris contributed a history of the early years of the Association,<sup>7</sup> and Peter Kivisto recounted the brief career of Catholic sociology. The issue also contained an analysis of the place of religion in turn-of-the-twentieth-century American sociology by Swatos and a comparison by Dobbelaere between the ACSS and

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<sup>6</sup> He also noted that, following up the decision to focus on the study of religion, the meeting in Denver at which he was delivering his address was being held jointly with the Religious Research Association. Shortly thereafter the RRA began meeting regularly with the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion. In 1982 the three societies held a joint meeting in Providence, Rhode Island. ASR otherwise has met at the same time and in the same city as the American Sociological Association, though in a separate venue, often a nearby college campus. The last such meeting was in 1983, when a decision was taken to meet at hotels thereafter. For a few years in the 1970s the ASR intentionally shared its meeting venue with the Society for the Study of Social Problems, which also meets at the same time and city as the ASA.

<sup>7</sup> One member of the ASR was angered enough by what he perceived to be Morris's celebration of the passing of "Catholic sociology" to write a rebuttal and demand that it be published in *Sociological Analysis*. Significantly, the critic was not a veteran of the ACSS but something of a religious neo-conservative. Somehow the information that I was a reviewer who recommended against publication of the critique, on the grounds that it was an opinion piece and hence not the *genre* of work the journal publishes, reached this individual, who proceeded to direct some animus my way.

the CISR. Notes and reminiscences were authored by Franz Mueller, Joseph Fitzpatrick, Andrew Greeley, Paul Reiss, Thomas Imse, Ruth Wallace, and David Moberg. In 1993 the name of the journal was changed to *Sociology of Religion*.

The Religious Research Association and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion chose 1999 as the most probable year for a fiftieth anniversary celebration for both organizations, inasmuch as each had grown out of earlier working groups. There had already been a session of recollections at their 1992 joint meeting, and selected papers from it and from special sessions marking the fiftieth anniversary comprise the December 2000 issue of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (volume 39, number 4), organized by special editors N.J. Demerath III, Edward C. Lehman, Jr., and William Silverman. David Moberg provided a history of the early years, followed by recollections by Charles Y. Glock, James E. Dittes, and William V. D'Antonio. The issue also contains analyses of the histories of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* by Armand Mauss and Stacey Hammond, of the *Review of Religious Research* by Swatos, and of the SISR/ISSR by Dobbelaere. James Beckford examined paradigms in the scientific study of religion, Ruth Wallace compared women in leadership roles in the American Sociological Association, the ACSS/ASR, SSSR and RRA, Mary Jo Neitz examined what Christian denominations had been studied by members of the SSSR, Thomas Robbins traced the study of new religious movements, Peter Beyer traced the study of non-Christian religions, Ralph Hood reviewed the psychology of religion in *JSSR*, and Jackson Carroll examined how the applied research conducted in the social scientific fields have affected religious organizations.

Given this fairly recent body of historical research on the American sociological (and more broadly social scientific) study of religious phenomena, there would be little point in duplicating what has already been done. Consequently, rather than a focus on the professional societies and broad trends, the scope of the present volume is on topical themes. It is not possible to cover all the important themes, particularly within the limits of one volume, and until a much more complete selection of works treating such themes is made available it is not possible to write a comprehensive history of American sociology of religion. So the present volume is modestly designated one of "histories" of American sociology of religion.

My opening chapter is first only by virtue of its temporal focus, not priority. It focuses on American dissertations in the sociology of religion

written prior to 1930. There is no way of knowing whether those that are described comprise an absolutely complete list—one would tend to be doubtful—but they are the ones about religion *known* to have been written in sociology departments. Such dissertations reflect what interests were to be found, at least among graduate students, in graduate departments in the first formative era of American sociology and hence are an important indicator of the state of the sociology of religion in the United States at the time.<sup>8</sup> The discussion treats the dissertations themselves and relegates accounts of the scholars who wrote them to footnotes, but a case can be made for the reverse procedure. The reason for directing the focus on the works themselves is that the search was for some indication of a beginning of an organized discipline, with citations of other works in the field and treatments of shared conceptual apparatus. Alas, such was not to be found. I should have known better; after all, the continuity in the praxis of a field, as noted above, is to be found in mentor/student relationships, not in abstract conceptualizations—unless such conceptualizations themselves begin to embody a *genre* of sociological praxis.

Sociological theory did in fact become a *genre* of disciplinary praxis at Harvard University, in a circle of students around Talcott Parsons in the 1930s and '40s. Parsons imported a speculative kind of intellectual labor from Europe that had been largely neglected in the Eastern United States since the days of Lester Ward and in the Midwest after Albion Small's tenure at the University of Chicago.<sup>9</sup> The second chapter, by Doyle Paul Johnson, examines the theoretical trajectories in American sociology of religion, beginning with Parsons. But while the Durkheimian side of Parsons's work led to functional analyses in general and the discussion of civil religion in particular, and the Weberian side to typological analysis (church, sect, etc.), his translation of Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* made it possible for a distinctive theoretical trajectory to develop. In the third chapter, William H. Swatos, Jr. and Peter Kivisto investigate the numerous claims made about Weber's thesis and trace its singular importance in American sociology of religion. While

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<sup>8</sup> On the importance of the Ph.D. for the field, see Blasi (2004).

<sup>9</sup> Though Small's writings were theoretical, Faris (1970: 12) writes, "Students in Small's classes report that he encouraged active research in preference to armchair theorizing and that he proposed to the department that the city of Chicago be used as a major object of research." Tellingly, George Herbert Mead, whose writings were typical of the European kind of intellectual labor, was located—uneasily—in the philosophy department at Chicago.

the concept of “history” in the first chapter was understood to place emphasis on primary documents mostly held in archives, in Chapter Two it more closely resembles the intellectual history that is traditionally associated with sociological theory. In Chapter Three Swatos and Kivisto pursue a historical method differing slightly from both; they seek to establish the scholarly *intent* behind Weber’s *protestantische Ethik* essays and their *reception* in the United States, in and on the basis of Parsons’s translation.

Three chapters on particular religions in the United States follow. Chapter Four, by Armand Mauss, updates studies of the Mormons and their Church. There was a special issue of the *Review of Religious Research* dedicated in part to the study of “Mormon or Utah Populations” (volume 25, number 2, December 1983), but no attempt was made in it to present a general history or overview of the sociological study of the Church of Latter-day Saints. Mauss provides precisely such an overview. The historical method that he employs is a review of the literature. There is always a temptation to read and write studies of particular religious traditions in something of a museological modality: just as a museum of natural history will have its share of stuffed birds, reptiles, fish, and mammals, the study of religion will need “one of each” in order to be complete. Giving the chapter that kind of a reading would result in missing much that is to be found there. The Mormons exemplify an interesting social form (in the Simmelian sense): a domestic people, in no sense foreign to the United States, undergoing a process of assimilation. There are many sociological problematics to be pursued in such a form.

Chapter Five, by James Cavendish, focuses on three areas of interest within the study of American Catholicism: (1) the development of the sociological investigation of American Catholicism in the period of time that it took form, from the 1930s to the early 1960s; (2) the major areas that have occupied the attention of sociologists of American Catholicism since changes began to emerge after and seemingly from the Second Vatican Council; and (3) the presentation of important promising avenues for future research. The effort is less inclusive than that of Mauss in Chapter Four, probably wisely so since the whole body of relevant literature is larger; but the method is largely the same—a review of the published literature. The sociological form in question is the immigrant church: pre-assimilated, assimilating, and upwardly mobile. Both the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Roman Catholic Church are organizations that are highly formal

in question, and both Mauss and Cavendish describe the inevitable tensions that develop when power structures come under the scrutiny of social scientists who are neither hostile nor intimidated.

In writing Chapter Six, Joseph B. Tamney faced a rather different situation from those the previous authors encountered. *History* implies a sequence of some kind for which one can construct a narrative. Most of the literature on American Buddhism, however, has been written since 1990. Consequently there is no narrative of the study of the object, i.e., Buddhism. Rather he provides overviews of sociologically different issues: the conversion of Americans of European ancestry to Buddhism, the experience of Asian immigrant Buddhists, the cultural impact of Buddhism on the United States, and the place of Buddhism in studies of modernization. The historical method is that of the familiar review of the literature, but it is reviewed in a quite different way. It is worth one's while to read Cavendish's chapter on Catholicism and Tamney's on Buddhism back to back; both involve the study of assimilating immigrant groups, but the formal organization in Catholicism resisted organizational change even as it made major adaptations in its ritual practices and theological articulation, while organizational changes in the Buddhist denominations and groups came relatively quickly.

Following the three chapters on religious traditions in America come two on the experience with religion on the part of two populations. Chapter Seven, by Nancy Nason-Clark and Barbara Fisher-Townsend, focuses on women, gender, and feminism in the sociology of religion. Gender and feminism had been historically neglected in the field, just as feminist theory had neglected religion. But once female scholars had entered the academy in good numbers, the next generation took feminist issues into account as a matter of course when they turned to the sociological study of religion. The presentation by Nason-Clark and Fisher-Townsend contrasts the eras of neglect, of contested entry, and of inquiry, the latter employing feminist-inspired sensitizing concepts. The effort is to identify the relevant literatures, characterize the works involved, and quantify trends.

The social scientific and even humanistic literature on Latino/a religion in America is smaller than that on women and gender issues, but the situation Alberto López Pulido describes in Chapter Eight manifests a certain parallel with the latter, at least with respect to Mexican American studies. And there is a certain irony in that fact, since the founder of Mexican American studies, the late Julian Samora, was a personally very religious individual. Nevertheless religion was a

neglected topic in the first generation of scholars in Mexican American, or Chicano, studies; and sociologists of religion generally neglected Mexican American religiosity. While giving due attention to the rare early works, the main narrative that López Pulido develops describes a later era, in which there was a “binary,” a chasm between institutional Catholicism and Latin religious expression. In going beyond that binary, studies focused on social activism on behalf of social justice by religious leaders and secular leaders who happened to be personally inspired by their religion. Later, ethnographies explored Latin religiosity in its own terms. Similar themes, though not developing in the same sequence, are manifest in the study of Puerto Rican religion. In assembling the studies for his overview, López Pulido had to analyze a number of little-known dissertations; he thereby gives us an unprecedented entry into this area of study.

Chapter Nine, by E. Burke Rochford, Jr., examines the study of new religions (especially studies of those that emerged in the later twentieth century in the West) as a mature field. It begins by identifying characteristics that define new religious movements as distinct religious phenomena. It then considers the bearing of the study of these movements on the secularization paradigm. A third section follows the trajectory of studies in which major areas of research in the field emerged. Finally, it assesses the contribution of new religious studies to sociology and the prospects of new religious studies becoming an established field of study. In general, Rochford’s contribution itself represents an advanced stage of a historical narrative; it goes well beyond the collection of early sources and a review of the literature—such are already to be found and are cited in the chapter—and into an appraisal of the significance of the area of study. Because the proportion of the population in the United States and elsewhere that is involved in new religions is, per definition, small, the question of why they merit study is asked as a matter of course. The chapter draws the many partial answers together into a general response, much to the advantage, in the process, of the sociology of religion as a whole.

The final chapter, by John H. Simpson, takes on history as a social, even cosmic, meta-narrative, followed by principal examples. His theme is globalization, but his focus—or rather, reach—is toward the social historical context of a time and place that makes a study of global phenomena in the sociology of religion possible. In the first instance he provides less of a review of the literature and more of a background and consideration of remote intellectual origins. Then he shows the

significance of the major themes made by major contributors to the study of globalization and of the place of religion within the globalization process.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### EARLY DISSERTATIONS IN AMERICAN SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

Anthony J. Blasi

Taking a reference-work approach, this chapter describes twelve American dissertations in the sociological study of religion that were written before 1930.<sup>1</sup> The earliest is sermonic in nature. The others better resemble the sociology of our day, but they reveal no conceptual development for the subdiscipline. Rather, they reflect typical studies found in general sociology in the universities at the time: a history of local charities sponsored by a denomination, an evaluation of ministries in an inner-city setting, a handbook for conducting community studies, religious demography, histories of a social institution and of a reform impulse, studies of cultural contact and ethnic settlement, a study of a category of organizations, an anthropological reconstruction of a culture, and a development of a pure type. The hegemony of the University of Chicago in the 1920s in the sociological study of religion, if not in sociology more generally, is evident inasmuch as seven of the twelve—and all of those published after 1918—were completed there.

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<sup>1</sup> A list was developed using the author's personal bibliography of works in the sociology of religion. Several items were deleted on account of not being written in graduate social science or sociology departments. Experience has shown that labels used in *Dissertation Abstracts* and its later incarnations frequently reflect the subject matter of the inquiry rather than the discipline of the degree; hence that source was not used unless there was an actual abstract to read, which is often not the case for early dissertations. In any case, no claim is made here of the list used being absolutely exhaustive.

*The Church and Social Reform*

by Dewitt Lincoln Pelton, New York University, 1895<sup>2</sup>

This dissertation is a short essay of only 32 pages that reads like an editorializing, almost sermonic, tract. It argues deductively, save for citing facts about poverty, crime, and suicide early on to make the case that social reform is needed. It cites Richard T. Ely approvingly and often, but references to Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner also appear. Pelton accepts Spencer and Sumner's argument that evolution has produced the best society possible, but he disagrees with Spencer's pessimism over the ability of humans to improve society through deliberate action.

Contemporary social unrest served as a point of departure for the discussion. Economic changes, the rise of democracy, and the spread of education contribute to social unrest, according to the author, and that unrest itself is testimony to the need for social reform. Despite poverty, unemployment, intemperance, crime, suicide, insanity, strikes, and financial crises, the present structure of society is on the whole successful. Attempting to overthrow the structure, as in the socialist program, is deemed impracticable and, while based in part on noble goals, is also based on covetousness. Thus the author calls for reform within the existing structure of society.

The church, he says, should be neither an advocate for the *status quo* nor for socialism. "Present progress demands an adherence to the main lines of the present order" (p. 17). But the church is and should be

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<sup>2</sup> On the title page of his dissertation, Dewitt Lincoln Pelton (b. 1866) gave Adams as his address, in far north central New York State. He wrote his dissertation for the Ph.D. degree from New York University in 1895; it must have been considered something of an experiment since that was the same year that sociology was first taught there, by Arthur Burnham Woodford. Pelton was an Episcopal priest who was serving as an assistant at St. Thomas' Church in Manhattan in 1904 when he accepted the pastorate of St. James, Fordham, in the Bronx; he held that post until 1934. He was married and had a son who served in World War I. According to an on-line history of St. James, the Rev. Pelton was described as a tall, thin, ascetic man, who in twenty minute Sunday discourses wended "his way through the learning of the ages to some belief, always in the present and over into the future." He initiated major building projects for the church and was a world traveler whose talks about his travels, aided by stereopticon slides, were popular. He served as chaplain of the 8th Coast Guard Artillery, the New York National Guard, the Bronx campus of New York University, and as Grand Chaplain of the New York Grand Lodge. The Library of Congress lists one tract that he published at age 62 (Pelton 1928).

more engaged in the world than in the recent past. Christian teachings themselves comprise a social reality that has consequences, such as the abolition of slavery, the call for the equality of women, and the effort to eliminate war. To work for such goals, Christian unity, not denominationalism, is a necessity. The object of church effort is the individual: "Through regenerate individuals will come, if it is possible, regenerate society" (p. 29). Moreover, "We have as good a social order now as we deserve, for all social systems are simply the expression of existing human nature. Regenerate & elevate human nature & the system will be changed with it" (p. 30).

The dissertation coheres with the Spencerian theoretical context, with its evolutionary and especially its individualist themes. It is innocent of the principle of emergent properties, which was propounded by Auguste Comte and would be propounded anew by Émile Durkheim in the same year as the dissertation. Similarly there is no empirical analysis, either in the methodical journalistic style of Harriett Martineau, the close attention to living conditions characteristic of Frédéric LePlay, the statistical style later used by Durkheim, or in the arraying of historical material that would characterize the work of Max Weber. Sociology was not yet a recognized field with an international scholarly network that would bring such strands together, though many of these strands predate 1895.

*Church Philanthropy in New York, A Study of the Philanthropic Institutions  
of the American Episcopal Church in the City of New York*  
by Floyd Appleton, Columbia University, 1906<sup>3</sup>

The dissertation begins with a history of Christian institutions for the poor and diseased, from antiquity to modern times. It works its way up to the founding of institutions by the Episcopal Church in New York

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<sup>3</sup> Floyd Appleton was born in 1871 in Morrisania, New York, a neighborhood in the Bronx. He studied at the College of the City of New York and transferred in 1892 to Columbia University, earning his bachelor's degree there in 1893. He graduated from the General Theological Seminary in 1896, and was ordained in the Episcopal Church 1898 by the Bishop of the New Jersey. He filled various church positions in Brooklyn, until he was appointed rector of St. Clement's Church there in 1904; the church no longer appears to exist. He was a graduate student at Columbia 1893-94, and 1897-1900. In 1906, the year of the publication of the dissertation, he was a member of the Social Services Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island.

in the nineteenth century. Reform, as opposed to palliation, became the programmatic theme after 1883, especially with reference to the establishment of the Neighborhood Guild settlement house in 1887. Episcopal activists in the “Evangelical” camp tended to develop parochial activities such as Sunday schools and missions. Those of the “High Anglican” camp tended to develop extra-parochial institutions, such as schools and hospitals. Those of the “Broad” school tended to develop extra-ecclesiastical works such as social and neighborhood effort.

The greater portion of the dissertation is a description of what had been termed “extra-parochial” institutions. There were thirteen remedial institutions in operation at the time—six hospitals and seven dispensaries. There were six institutions for the incurable, mostly homes for the deaf and blind. There were thirteen agencies for the dependent (aged and orphans), which sought to be homes rather than institutions. Appleton describes the physical facilities and management structures, and presents data on case loads, funding sources, and expenditures by year. He offers editorial observations about the strong and weak points of the various agencies, having the most to say about the homes for the dependent. He makes only one passing reference to another sociological work—F.H. Giddings’ *Principles of Sociology*.

The concluding section, “Critique,” argues that the individualistic ideals of the eighteenth century have been superseded by the social ideals of the twentieth. It maintains that it is necessary to think in terms of the availability of work, a living wage, and provision for medical care and retirement, rather than wait until relief is necessary. Arguing against the “survival of the fittest” ideology, the author proposes that the Church has shown that all humans have a redeemable side. If the state can be persuaded to take on more of what the Church does, the latter can always do it on a smaller and hence more humane scale. The need remains for the Church to enter into the area of recreation. In an implicit critique of some church people, he argues that human welfare, permanent human happiness, must be the object of church work, not numbers of adherents.

*Down-Town Church*

by Clarence Andrew Young, University of Pennsylvania, 1912<sup>4</sup>

Young's dissertation examines the downtown churches of Philadelphia, which the author presumed to be typical of those of the downtown sections of large American cities. The author seems to be well read in the sociology of his day, citing, among others, Lester F. Ward, the anthropologist F.B. Jevons, the Australian anthropological studies of Baldwin Spencer and F.J. Gillen, as well as Benjamin Kidd, Edwin Lee Earp, Edward A. Ross, Albion W. Small, and W.E.B. Dubois. His thesis is that "the Church," by which he means the Protestant churches, was failing to have much impact on the residents of downtown Philadelphia. The underlying problem was that the middle classes who were churched in the Reformation tradition were moving to the suburbs and being replaced by Catholic and Jewish working-class immigrants.

Between 1880 and 1911, according to Young's tally, nine white Baptist churches in downtown Philadelphia having 3,501 members had been reduced to two having 737; fourteen Methodist churches with 6,131 members were reduced to eight with 1,719; twenty-one Presbyterian with 7,630 to seven with 2,405; six Friends congregations to one, twenty-four others to seven. The denominations that held their own were the Episcopal church, which went from eighteen to ten churches but remained stable in membership, dropping only from 5,323 to 5,219; the Lutherans who had five churches in the downtown area both years; the Black churches which, though dropping from thirteen to eleven, increased in membership from 4,662 to 10,173, and the Jewish synagogues, which grew from nine to thirty-five. He thought the synagogues were losing their young people because of their seemingly irrelevant services in Yiddish. Young did almost no research on the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, but he noted that there were eighteen of the former (including two of the Greek rite and one Black parish) and two Orthodox churches. He believed that the Catholics held

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<sup>4</sup> Clarence Andrew Young, according to the Historical Center of the Presbyterian Church in America, was born circa 1876 and died October 9, 1923. He graduated from Cedarville College in 1900 and served as the pastor of the Third Reformed Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, 1905 to 1910. After writing his dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania, he transferred to the Boston Presbytery, Synod of New England, Presbyterian Church in the USA, and served as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Roxbury, Massachusetts.

their own because of their generous staffing and their parochial schools. He did not believe that the Salvation Army and other rescue missions affected many people's religiosity, but he seemed to be impressed by the religiously-affiliated settlement houses, the vacation Bible schools (which taught much more than Bible), and the Presbyterian missions to the Italians, the latter disaffected from the Roman Catholic church because of its opposition to the formation of the Italian nation.

The causes of the general effectiveness of "the church," according to Young, were the demographic changes affecting the downtown district, the hard lives of the poor in the downtown area leaving little room for religious quests, the upper-class aspect that many churches presented, the availability of substitute organizations such as fraternal organizations, unions, and socialist political groups, and the tendency of the "the church" to be divided into competing denominations and thus to seek out the able rather than the needy. His proposed remedy involved multid denominational planning of the locations of churches so as to avoid competition and clustering, the use of research to ascertain what people fail to get at home and to provide programs accordingly, greater financial support, attracting the more able clergy rather than simply allowing the latter to be drawn to the suburbs, and to generate appropriate motives and spirit.

*The Community Survey in Relation to Church Efficiency*  
by Charles Eden Carroll, University of Denver, 1915<sup>5</sup>

Carroll's dissertation was intended as a handbook for the conducting of community surveys by congregations and their ministers. In that *genre*

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Eden Carroll (b. 1877) earned the A.B. at Morningside College (Iowa) in 1905, the M.A. at the University of Nebraska (Carroll 1912), and the Ph.D. at the University of Denver in 1914. He served as a professor of social science at Boston University from 1919 to 1927. The work under discussion here was his dissertation for the Ph.D., published in the year following the conferral of the degree (Carroll 1915). In the "Preface" he refers to his experience in the pastorate in country, town, and city locations, and to his having conducted surveys in Nebraska, Colorado, and Utah. He acknowledges his indebtedness to his "present friend and former instructor—whose eminent scholarship and loftiness of social vision first stimulated him to lay the foundations for this work—Head Professor George Elliott Howard, Ph.D., University of Nebraska" (p. xi). George Elliott Howard was a renowned family sociologist and 1917 president of the American Sociological Society (see Hill 2000). Methodist Bishop Francis J. McConnell writes an introduction to the volume and mentions sending Carroll "a few months ago" to "study conditions in a typical Mormon town" (p. xiv).

of work, it predated volumes by Charles Luther Fry (1924), Edmund de S. Brunner (1925) and H. Paul Douglass (1928), but came after that by Warren Hugh Wilson (1912). Part I, consisting of four brief chapters, treats the relationship between the Christian church and social science. It argues that since individuals are social the betterment of their religious condition needs to begin with their social environment. The concern is not simply with those who experience deprivation but also with the wealthy. Carroll conceived the survey as a means for acquiring facts for social action—or for “practical sociology.” The facts in question were those pertinent to the conditions of the working class, the housing of families, the causes and responses to delinquency, wholesome recreational opportunities for the young, and the factors leading to the depopulation of rural areas. He saw it as also important to ask what the churches were doing for their neighborhoods and what the environmental contexts were for the rise and decline of various religious phenomena. He summarizes surveys of various communities that had been conducted and shows how they enabled clergy and congregations to identify and recruit prospective members. Interestingly, Carroll does not seem to favor raiding non-Protestant religions—principally Catholic and Jewish—unlike the overseas missionaries whose views are examined in the dissertation by Maurice Price (see below). Carroll seems particularly intent in determining *whether* a church should be constructed in a given neighborhood and, if so, of what denomination. He wanted to avoid the inefficiency of duplication implicit in interdenominational competition.

Part II, consisting of five chapters, presents the nuts and bolts of conducting community studies. It is not a matter of a single paradigm, but rather of alternatives that could vary by the purpose, scope, and auspices of the study. An advisory board would vary, depending on who would be sponsoring the study. The division of labor would depend on the scope of the study: would it be focusing on purely religious information or social data in general? Carroll provides sample church census cards that would be useful for monitoring the present and potential clientele of one or more churches. He also presents a sample data sheet for recording the social and financial history of the local church, and sample interview schedules. He lists information to be obtained about the locality itself—its resources, schools, organizations, etc. In addition, he lists secondary sources where further information may be had.

Carroll discusses the advantages, limitations, and uses of personal investigation, the obtaining of estimates from correspondents, schedules

to be filled out by informants, and schedules for use by canvassers. He explains how to aggregate data on separate tally sheets (e.g., people's denominations, reasons for non-attendance, nationalities) and how to organize card files of information about households. He does not make any provision for the cross-tabulation of data. Rather, he describes the use of percentages, rates, averages (means), the mode, frequency tables, graphs, maps, pie charts, bar graphs, and the like. His procedures were purely descriptive. He places his emphasis on following up data collection with visitations, with reports to the congregation, and with programs appropriate for the neighborhood, especially community service programs. He envisioned service programs sponsored by the individual congregation, by ecumenical clusters of congregations, and by local governments.

*The Churches of Allentown: A Study in Statistics*

by James H.S. Bossard, University of Pennsylvania, 1918<sup>6</sup>

This dissertation begins with a social and economic history of Allentown, a community that began as a Pennsylvania German village and grew into an industrial city, drawing most of its population from the Pennsylvania Germans of the countryside and, after 1890, from turn-of-the-century European immigration. It then provides the religious history, describing the German Pietists as companions of William Penn's Quakers. Once a German-speaking settlement had been established, congregations of a number of ethnic German denominations were organized, including ones of historically German denominations holding services in English.

In attempting to establish denominational membership data for the year 1917, Bossard faced the well-known dilemmas of religious statistics—some churches counted children and some did not, and some attenders were not members while some members did not attend. He

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<sup>6</sup> According to passing comments in his dissertation, James Herbert Seward Bossard (1888–1960) spent his childhood in a small village near Allentown, Pennsylvania and later worked in the city of Allentown as a newspaper reporter, serving one year as editorial writer for the *Morning Call*. He also mentions teaching at Muehlenberg College, where C. Luther Fry (1894–1938, professor at the University of Rochester and Fisk University) was one of his students. Bossard spent most of his subsequent academic career at the University of Pennsylvania; however there is no record of major figures working principally in the sociology of religion earning their doctorates at Pennsylvania.

decided to tally confirmed members as the best approximation; in the case of Catholics, who counted children, he came across one parish's statistics showing that 75% of the baptized had been confirmed, and he extrapolated that figure to the other parishes. He was also cognizant of the fact that estimating what proportion of the Allentown population was churched was complicated by some church members not living in Allentown and some Allentown residents belonging to countryside churches. The count came to 21,193 Protestants (7,355 Reformed; 5,036 General Council Lutheran; 2,217 United Evangelical; 1,784 General Synod Lutheran; 863 Evangelical Association—all of these being historically German denominations; Methodist 698; Presbyterian 674; Episcopalian 586; German Baptist 427; United Brethren 414; Mennonite Brethren in Christ 399; Baptist 344; 11,344 Catholics; 630 Orthodox; and 201 Jews. By his estimate, 53.77% of the population 10 years of age and older and 59.7% of those 15 years of age and older were church members. About 66% of the church members were Protestant and 34% some kind of Catholic, mostly Roman. By making comparisons with 1890 Census data on Allentown church membership, he ascertained that the churches were holding their own or growing.

In order to determine Protestant and Jewish church or synagogue attendance, Bossard had students from Muehlenberg College attend 50 churches and make counts; he also recruited acquaintances to make counts in the same 50 churches. Two fair-weather Sundays in April 1917 were selected for the data collection. If the student and acquaintance totals differed slightly; he accepted the higher count. If the totals differed greatly, he made a third count. If the two Sundays differed, he again accepted the higher count. He estimated that one-in-ten Protestants attended Sunday morning services, and one-in-eight attended Sunday evening services. He collected data on people who had to work on Sundays, finding rather high totals. He also noted that some did not attend for lack of formal attire, and that many were in too poor health to attend services. There were also those who did not wish to attend, but rather read the Sunday paper, went on excursions out of town, or spent Sunday in social clubs or country clubs. Observing that organized religion could influence only a minority of the population, he noted the greater potential impact for good or ill of motion pictures (65–85% of the population) and the newspapers.

The project seemed to rely on no previous studies for purposes of developing a methodology; however Bossard did cite "Professor Hayes" (presumably Edward Carey Hayes) and Charles Horton Cooley in describing social influences on people.

*The Rise of Religious Journalism in the United States*  
by Howard Eikenberry Jensen, University of Chicago, 1920<sup>7</sup>

The stated need for this study is the scholarly neglect of religious journals. That neglect is found unfortunate because their “unconscious portrayal of the social background, and their naive revelation of contemporary religious attitudes are unerring in their fidelity” (p. 2). Jensen seems to mean that they provide rich material for inquiry, not that they are representative of any general population of religious people. Throughout the study he refers to the functions of religious journalism, but he does not seem to adhere to a functionalism whereby postulated functional needs would inevitably create appropriate institutions. For example, he states that the “two primary functions of the religious periodical press, socialization and propaganda, conspired to strengthen its emotional tone” (p. 10). The general organization of the dissertation is strange: chapter two offers a summary; chapter three, a state of the situation up to 1845; chapter four covers 1690–1800; chapter five, 1800–1814; chapter six, 1815–1825, chapter seven, 1826–45, and chapter eight discusses the religious journal as a socializing agent.

Before 1800 publishers faced censorship. The earliest journals, before 1760, were dominated by clergy, but politically oriented papers began to appear in the pre-Revolutionary period. A milestone was the *Christian History* of Thomas Prince, Jr. in 1743. Humanitarian and religious papers appeared among the Pennsylvania Germans.

Pre-denominational religious journalism thrived from 1800 to 1814, aiming at the revivals in the West. Theological controversy between liberals and conservatives engendered a number of periodicals in the same era. Once the theological issues died out, missionary endeavors provided copy.

The denominational press emerged in the decade after 1815, beginning with the emergence of the Unitarian and Universalist denominations. Tensions between revivalism and traditional Calvinism led to further publications in Presbyterian and Congregational circles. The

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<sup>7</sup> Howard Eikenberry Jensen (b. 1889) earned the B.A. in 1914 and the M.A. in 1915 at the University of Kansas, and a B.D. at the University of Chicago before writing his Chicago Ph.D. dissertation in sociology. He taught at Butler University in Indianapolis from 1921 to 1928, then at the University of Missouri until 1931, and finally at Duke University, beginning in 1931.

general denominationalism of the era led to the sectarian organs supplanting the older non-denominational press. The new papers were often tied to fund-raising for missionary and educational projects.

Perhaps the most interesting era is that between 1826 and 1845. Weeklies, which could keep up with current events more effectively and feature brief polemical editorials, began to replace the older quarterlies as general religious media. The lengthier quarterlies shifted to specializing as theological journals. Internal controversies in the denominations, especially over forms of governance, engendered most of the new periodicals. The controversies led to a number of schisms. With the multiplication of religious bodies, a number of denominational organs came into existence—homiletical reviews, educational journals, Sunday school weeklies, tract series, and juvenile magazines. Slavery became an issue in the journals and the occasion of further schisms only after 1830, once the expansion of the cotton industry made it clear that slavery would not come to an end on its own. At the same time, peace and temperance movements gave rise to new journals.

By way of summary, Jensen notes, “Socially and ethically the thinking represented by the religious periodical was usually behind its age and rarely abreast of the majority sentiment of either ministers or laymen” (p. 213). Returning to the theme of functions, he notes, “It [the religious press] broke down geographical isolation and made possible the rise of national churches, as well as of voluntary benevolent and socio-religious movements” (p. 214). It also furthered nation-wide controversies that led to schisms (p. 215).

*The Evolution of the Social Consciousness in Methodism*  
by Kenneth Edwin Barnhart, 1924<sup>8</sup>

This dissertation is a straightforward history of social thought in Methodism, beginning with John Wesley in England and taking up the trajectory in the United States in the nineteenth century. Wesley performed charitable works in his youth, but with his own individual

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<sup>8</sup> We know little about Kenneth Edwin Barnhart, other than the fact that he earned the Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Chicago in 1924 and that the Birmingham-Southern College library lists a study of homicide by him as a faculty publication (Barnhart 1932).

salvation in mind. His conversion and early career centered on individual salvation for himself and for those to whom he ministered. He adopted an emotional revivalism at first but soon abandoned it. Only later in his career did he see social services, charities, and justice as ends in themselves, and his accomplishments in these respects were impressive. After age 65 he became interested in politics, though as a Tory, opposing the American Revolution and increases in liberty. He did, however, advocate universal suffrage—no property qualification and no exclusion of women. He opposed slavery and the liquor industry, and his economic analyses argued that extravagances among the wealthy created shortages among the poor.

Early nineteenth-century American Methodism began with an individualist revivalist religion rather than a social one. The “church and the working classes drifted further and further apart. The church became more and more interested in doctrines; the working men more and more interested in obtaining better working conditions, and neither group was much concerned with the other” (p. 74). But from the 1830s in England labor leaders, especially those of the miners, were often Methodists, and the Methodist church was promoting their cause. In America the initial disapproval of slavery gave way before opposition; ministers who openly agitated against slavery were expelled. This changed in 1844, provoking a split into Northern and Southern Churches. Meanwhile, the Church had been creating Sunday schools, academies, and colleges as institutions for the basic education of the poor.

In the late nineteenth century, the American church took up a social view of good and evil. Methodist writers began citing two Congregational clergymen—Washington Gladden and Josiah Strong—and an Episcopal layman-economist—Richard T. Ely. The Methodist clergy rediscovered the social teachings of the Bible and began to preach occasionally on social issues. Barnhart quotes numerous passages from the *Methodist Review* to show the trend. For information on the American labor movement, he cites John R. Commons. In 1904 the General Conference began making official statements that were moderately pro-worker and pro-union, and in 1906 the *Methodist Review* stated that workers’ resort to the strike was justified. The Methodist Federation for Social Service dates from 1907, and in 1908 the Methodists and other member churches of the Federal Council of Churches accepted a “Social Creed of the Church.”

*Christian Missions and Oriental Civilizations: A Study in Culture Contact*  
by Maurice T. Price, University of Chicago, 1924<sup>9</sup>

*Christian Missions and Oriental Civilizations* applies a “modified objectist” methodology to the responses of non-European people to European Protestant Christian missions. This approach is said to come from the “Thomas-Park school of sociologists” (p. 506), wherein the scientific project leads to behavioristic data, but “*ideational and affective experiences as they are recorded in document and testimony, cannot be overlooked*” (p. 502). Thus subjects give their own introspective data, sometimes naively, while also providing testimony about others’ overt behavior. The result of this documentary method is a massive volume that resembles both the *Polish Peasant in Europe and America* by William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1919–20) and the *Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James (1903). The author was unwilling to resort to a “total objectivism” as typified by I.Q. tests. Rather, he set out to observe stimulus-response sequences, but not as cause and effect:

cognizance is taken of the fact that, an organism, aside from the great increase in conditioning factors, is characterized by certain tendencies-to-act-in-certain-ways both by themselves and through habituations peculiar to the individual or group, and that these compel it to give preferential attention in its behavior to certain aspects of the stimulating field. (p. 507)

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<sup>9</sup> Maurice Thomas Price (1888–1964) indicates that he was in close association with missionaries from 1902 to 1914. He earned an A.B. in 1910 at the University of Chicago and took graduate courses conducted by Albion W. Small, W.I. Thomas, and Robert E. Park in the sociology program there from 1909 to 1916, writing a M.A. dissertation, *Crisis in the Regulation of Conduct* (1914) and a Ph.D. dissertation, *The Analysis of Christian Propaganda in Race Contact* (1924). Other courses were in psychology from Edward S. Ames, social psychology from George H. Mead, and religion from George Burman Foster. He also studied at the Oberlin Theological and Graduate School and at the Rochester Theological Seminary, earning a diploma at the latter institution in 1913. The present report focuses on the privately printed volume from his dissertation study (1924), for which Robert E. Park wrote a foreword. Price spent the years 1917–21 and 1922–27 in China as the foreign representative of the Edward Evans and Sons educational supply house. He began teaching only in 1927 at the University of Washington, where he served in a visiting capacity until 1931. From 1935 to 1945 he was a visiting lecturer at the University of Illinois, Urbana; during that time, 1937–39, he conducted studies for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and served as acting head of the Human Dependency Unit of Technical Cooperation. The Maurice T. Price papers are located in the University of Illinois archives.

Moreover, he observed circumstances in which subjects were dominated by specific stimuli and responses rather than introducing controls in a laboratory (p. 509).

His procedure was to organize into types the illustrative documents recording the responses of would-be converts to the missionaries and of the missionaries' responses to those responses, and then explaining those types with underlying psychological needs (one thinks of Thomas's "four wishes"). The first set of descriptive types provided the chapter headings of the volume—e.g. first impulsive reactions, initial indifference, resistance (passive opposition), counter-attack, tacit cooperation (passive receptivity), readiness to join (active receptivity). Price's typology of needs includes: (1) nutritional and reproductive needs; (2) activity, including (a) explorative and investigative, (b) acquisitive, and (c) mastering activity; (3) protective needs, and (4) sociality and esteem (self-respect) needs. It should be noted that any one underlying need could explain given exemplary actions of different descriptive types; thus both acquisitive needs and protective needs can explain resistance. Moreover any one need can explain examples of conduct from different descriptive types; thus people to whom the missionaries direct their efforts could either resist or co-operate with the missionaries out of a need to be explorative.

The author thanks his teachers in his preface, including "Professor George H. Meade." This is quite usual, but it is intriguing how a study so contrary to the spirit of George Herbert Mead employs his language here and there. The reference to stimulus-and-response but not as cause and effect could well have come from Mead; it would have been intended to refer to interaction, or the conversation of significant symbols, but in Price's hands they are simply occasions for descriptive material to be allocated to types, only to be "really" explained by underlying needs. Similarly, this Meadian theme that was to form the heart of the *Philosophy of the Present* (Mead 1932) is never utilized to interpret any of the many documents that the author presents: "Now any self-feeling is the product of one's present as over against one's previous possessions, activities, beliefs, and sentiments, or as over against those of others" (p. 302). One of the insights from W.I. Thomas fares no better: the "definition of the situation" is a "verbal classification technique" utilized by subjects. "This is not by any means mere stage play: it is genuinely self-protective in its impulse" (p. 222). The real story, of course, is to be read in the impulses, not in the definition of the situation.

The reader who is familiar with the theories of Mead and Thomas will likely conclude that this student "just didn't get it." Nevertheless

the various documents, taken as ethnographic snippets, present a real drama. A Muslim boy is torn between the social pull of his family and society, even while pursuing a peculiarly Christian quest for redemption. A Chinese girl works hard to please the missionary teachers in a school while warned by family not to abandon the ancestors. A network of scholars reforms Hinduism so that it may better face the Christian missions. A missionary befriends an Eastern Christian in hopes of “converting” him. A minor cognitive change brought about in a simple hunting and gathering society leads to a complete cultural collapse. A group of missionaries sense that the colonial power with which they are identified constitutes the greatest obstacle to their message being accepted by their would-be converts.

As many analogies as there are between this work and the *Polish Peasant* study by Thomas and Znaniecki, one great difference stands out. Thomas and Znaniecki were looking at one historical phenomenon—its background in a Poland colonized by the Austrians, Germans, and Russians, the disruptive effects of an underground indigenous intellectual culture centered in the church, the uprooted nature of immigrant life in Chicago, the tentative interactions between the Chicago institutions and the immigrants’ lives. Thomas’s references to four wishes turned out, literally, to be mere footnotes. But in the Price study, the underlying psychological explanations play a much greater role, while the documentary materials pertain to a scatter of sociocultural settings in Japan, China, India, Turkey, Armenia, and Africa.

*Negro Theological Seminary Survey*

by William Andrew Daniel, University of Chicago, 1925<sup>10</sup>

This dissertation was probably the first one in sociology by an African American.<sup>11</sup> The objective of the study was to formulate an objective description of an important institution in African American life, the

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<sup>10</sup> William Andrew Daniel (b. 1895) earned the Master’s degree in sociology at the University of Chicago in 1923, writing a thesis with the title *Bi-Racial Organization*, before earning the Ph.D. in the same department in 1925 with the dissertation, *Negro Theological Seminary Survey*. The subtitle of the published version of the research indicates that it was based on a survey of theological schools for Negroes made by Robert L. Kelly and the author (Daniel 1925). Daniel also contributed a study of the education African Americans received in a number of American cities in a book edited by T.J. Woofler (1928).

<sup>11</sup> Since Daniel earned an A.B. at Virginia Union College, a historically black institution, we can surmise that he was an African American.

kind of school in which so many of the leaders in the African American community were educated; and to identify external factors that affected its situation. Daniel collected data on all the African American schools in the United States “that advertised theological courses for 1923–24,” some 52 schools. “Courses” in this context referred to degree programs, not individual classes. The total theological enrollment in the degree programs was 1,011. The material was gathered on personal visits to the schools, letters, written and oral interviews, and a review of reports, bulletins, catalogs, and various papers. The “written interviews” provided life histories of theology students.

The theology programs in question were mostly attached to colleges that included high school and even primary school programs. Some were founded after the Civil War as missionary endeavors of large, predominantly white northern religious denominations, others in the same era by Black churches. Some assistance early on came from the federal Freedman’s Bureau: “The purpose of this movement seems to have been to enable the freedmen to assimilate the white man’s culture more rapidly and more completely than the conditions of slavery permitted. . . . Like other missionary enterprises this movement was characterized by religious enthusiasm, sacrifice, sympathy, and denominationalism” (p. 16). At first, the schools aimed at basic literacy, but with time they focused on higher-level programs to make ministers of the most promising students.

By the end of the nineteenth century, a new situation had emerged. The African American minister still played an important role, a point on which Daniel cites DuBois (pp. 17–18), but the migration to the cities caused “social disorganization” by removing people from primary communities and inserting them into a secondary society, a point on which Daniel cites Cooley, “Park and Miller” (Thomas, Park, and Miller 1921).<sup>12</sup> Daniel observed that race consciousness increased with the combination of education and segregation; he saw the founding of the schools and their theological departments as a result of that racial consciousness. The dominating preacher would be more typical of the primary community, not the secondary urban society. Accordingly, the theology programs began to suffer from neglect while secular fields received more attention.

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<sup>12</sup> At various points Daniel cites articles by Robert E. Park.

The 52 schools were divided among fourteen denominations, a condition that created costly duplications. Sometimes there were very large governing boards comprised of hardly-educated members who were disposed to intervene in the operation of the institutions. Admissions standards were low and resulted in a broad range of preparation among the students in a given class. Students were often already pastors; they registered in the schools to gain status in their communities but seldom attended classes. Those classes were often at the high school level; of the 1,011 “regular” (not correspondence students) students, only 38 were college graduates and only 219 were high school graduates. School presidents often had to rely on *these* students in their fund-raising ventures. The theological faculties were usually small and consisted largely of part-time professors. They frequently canceled classes in order to attend church conferences. Academic records in the theology departments were often poorly kept. Requirements for degrees varied greatly, and curricula varied by denomination.

Early influences on the students included religious parents and Sunday school teachers. Those students who actually attended classes matured intellectually and began to depart from the fundamentalist heritage of those early influentials. Interestingly, the students tended not to have experienced the dramatic conversions prized in their communities. They did, however, believe they were especially called by God to preach. Their problems included an anticipated anti-intellectualism in the congregations they would serve, and social isolation caused by a taboo on much of social life. They believed finding wives would be difficult under such circumstances.

Ministry students were often favored in grants of financial aid from the schools; however, “Some of the men who received financial assistance from the school on the belief that they plan to enter the ministry are known by their fellow students not to be seriously considering it, others to be obviously unfit, and many of those who are sincere to be likely to change their minds” (p. 81). Non-ministry students in the schools, who comprised the vast majority of student bodies, resented the preferential treatment ministry students received in the allocation of financial assistance. Moreover, standards were higher in the non-theological programs, both in terms of admissions requirements and course expectations.

The belief that the ministry is a call from God helped minimize interest in the genuine academic preparation of the clergy. The ethos of the home communities of the ministry students was often conformist

while that at the schools sought to be critical. Thus to the extent that the schools had any impact, they sowed the seeds of conflict between the clergy and their communities.

Daniel's study strikes the reader as perceptive and informative. In light of his findings it is not surprising that it would be only in a later generation that the church leadership of the African American population would organize the masses in a civil rights movement.

*A Social Study of the Mennonite Settlement in the Counties of  
Marion, McPherson, Harvey, Reno, and Butler, Kansas*  
by Cornelius Cicero Janzen, University of Chicago, 1926<sup>13</sup>

Janzen relied on interviews, diaries, church and secular records, and newspapers. He describes a rural settlement in five counties in central Kansas that originated in 1873. There were some 15,000 Mennonites in a local total population of 25,000. Most were descendents of immigrants from Russia who spoke Low German. About two-thirds were church members in 47 congregations distributed among five different church conferences. (One congregation was independent.)

Three chapters provide a history of the Kansas Mennonites. Chapter two traces the early Anabaptist history and the influence of Meno Simons (1496–1561) in the Netherlands. Under conditions of persecution and restrictions, the movement in Prussia was required to conduct its formal activities in High German. Principles in the movement included a withdrawal from government and politics, pacifism,

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<sup>13</sup> Cornelius Cicero Janzen (b. 1887) had inside information about Mennonite life himself, having grown up in one of the Kansas Mennonite communities that he studied. He attended one of the short-lived German language schools as a child and studied at Tabor College (p. 101, n. 5). As a graduate student in sociology at the University of Kansas, he came to appreciate the "wealth of unused material" that "lay right at his hand" (p. 5). He wrote a thesis on his home community for the Master's degree at the University of Kansas (1914) and expanded it as a dissertation at the University of Chicago for his 1926 doctorate. It is that dissertation which is under consideration here. He writes of having worked as a teacher in the local public (but still Mennonite-dominated) schools in central Kansas and as serving as a member of the faculty of Bethel College (p. 100, n. 4; 113). Tabor College, founded in 1908, is located in Hillsboro, Kansas; it is sponsored by the Mennonite Brethren Church. Bethel College, founded in 1887, is located in North Newton, Kansas; it is sponsored by the Mennonite Church. At the time of the foundings of these two colleges, the two church conferences involved with the establishment of Tabor (Mennonite Brethren and Krimmen Mennonite Brethren) were more traditionalist than the conference involved with the establishment of Bethel (General Conference Mennonites).

biblical literalism, adult baptism, and congregational polity. Chapter three recounts the migration to southern Russian territories at the invitation of Catherine the Great, who wanted a settled and productive population there rather than nomadic bands. The Mennonites survived the difficult pioneer circumstances from 1789 and were prospering by 1870. Because there was no effective government in the region, they had to adapt their traditions and form their own local government. Chapter four relates how, in 1870, the Czarist government began to impose a cultural Russification. The Mennonites prepared to emigrate *en masse*; so the government reversed itself in order not to lose them. Those most distrustful of the Russian government and most attached to their German culture—which they perceived as superior to that of the less prosperous Russians—left anyway. Some 15,000 migrated to Manitoba, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Kansas. The Santa Fe Railroad was eager to sell the arriving Mennonites land along its route through Kansas on good terms.

Chapter five, focusing on economic activities, relates that, wanting at first to settle in villages, the Mennonites bought out the farms of their neighboring Americans whenever they could in order to make concentrations of their population possible. However, they soon settled on separate family farmsteads, in the American manner, and adopted American agricultural methods, which proved to be superior to those they knew from Russia. But they did retain the strains of wheat from Russia that were well adapted to the Great Plains environment. Chapter six describes the Kansas Mennonites' political involvements. They only gradually became active citizens. In the post-Civil War era they tended to be Republicans and to oppose new political ideas such as women's suffrage. Not wanting at first to resort to governmental coercion, they endured the taunts and rowdiness of youth gangs, especially outside their churches on Sundays. After a time, however, they were willing to resort to the police. They tended to settle disputes internal to their community privately, often under pressure from the church, rather than resort to litigation. Their pacifism created difficulties during the Spanish-American and First World Wars. They declined to take oaths, but were willing to hold governmental positions that did not involve the use of force.

Chapter seven describes religious organization. Characteristic Mennonite individualism, combined with congregational polity, led to numerous schisms. Because of their general unlearnedness, religious disputes often centered on secondary issues, such as dress codes and whether to

baptize by sprinkling or immersion, or immersion forward or backward. The Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference, a faction from the Crimean Peninsula, favored emotional services and conservative dress, and deemed any pleasures, including the use of musical instruments, to be sinful. The Mennonite Brethren Conference was formed in Kansas by a group almost as conservative. The General Conference Mennonites, the largest group, arrived as an intact religious organization from Russia but soon merged into the pre-existing North American conference bearing that name; it favored more formal worship and a less strict mode of life. It had salaried and educated clergy. The Krimmer Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren Conferences co-operated with one another, allowed intermarriage between their members, and jointly supported Tabor College. The chapter goes on to describe the conferences' missionary endeavors, relief work, and hospitals. As it became increasingly difficult to maintain "German schools," the congregations organized Sunday schools. There were also youth societies, sewing societies that auctioned off their products for the support of the missions, mission festivals highlighting reports of returning missionaries and raising funds, Bible conferences, and catechetical classes for prospective members. Incredibly, Janzen provides no ethnographic account of these religious activities; it did not seem to occur to him that readers unfamiliar with Mennonite life would benefit from close description.

Most of chapter eight, describing cultural activities, deals with education. Since the Mennonites spoke Low German at home but conducted their formal religious activities in High German, they needed German language schools, focused on the literary language and on the Bible. In order to obtain state funding, they assumed control of the public school districts, paying the teachers by contract from public funds during an "English term" and offering them (verbally) \$1.00 during a "German term." As Kansas began to formalize the state's public education, the English terms had to be lengthened until they all but crowded out the German terms. German and Bible began to be (unconstitutionally) introduced into the regular school hours or offered after hours in nearby private facilities. But by 1918, after the war with Germany, anti-German feeling in Kansas was high; mobs arrived and tore down the facilities in which the German and Bible classes were taught. Moreover, the following year Kansas prescribed that only English was to be used for education; it was not until 1923 that the United States Supreme Court nullified that law as a violation of the freedom of speech. The outcome of this history was that Bible instruction was carried on in

Sunday school sessions, and though Low German was still spoken at home, literary German disappeared.

In order to prepare Mennonite clergy and teachers for the public and Sunday schools, there was a movement to establish preparatory schools. As public high schools began to duplicate the programs of these entities, the latter were consolidated into colleges. The colleges had elementary, academy, and normal departments as well as college-level courses during a transition period. The General Conference established Bethel College, which the Mennonite Brethren and Krimmer Mennonites found too liberal. These latter established Tabor College. The Old Mennonites established Hesston College, which was conservative not only in religious doctrine but had a dress code and prohibited music. Beyond schools, there were teachers associations, religious newspapers and publishing houses, and general newspapers.

Chapter nine identifies peculiar Mennonite social customs and attitudes. There was intrachurch socializing. Families were patriarchal. The American pattern of courtship was replacing arranged marriage. Small formal weddings, in the American pattern, were replacing large communal celebrations of weddings. Janzen provides line graphs of marriage ages and bar graphs of age differences between brides and grooms. He notes a decrease from a high birth rate. The populace was morally observant, with any sexual immorality made public in the church congregations. Divorce followed by remarriage was rare; indeed it required one first to leave the church. Second marriage after a spouse's death proved to be difficult, because of the scarcity of eligible Mennonite spouses-to-be; consequently second marriages were often unhappy unions of only-available persons.

An attitude of other-worldliness as prevailing over ties of family and locality prevailed among the early settlers. Graves, for example, were placed in chronological order. More recently, however, graves were grouped by families, and institutes were established to gather and write Mennonite history and to keep records. Similarly, there was a shift from grandparents' German first names to American ones. While older church congregations were named after Bible places and principles, newer ones were named for their geographical locales.

The early settlers disapproved of games and amusements, but later generations, at least in the General Conference, accepted movies, theatre, opera, and circus. There was little use of alcohol. Such occupations as teaching, ministry, and business were being added to farming, but Mennonites were still reluctant to go into law.

Chapter ten provides a sociological interpretation of these data. Without using the expression *majority/minority relations*, Janzen writes of a small group maintaining its identity while living in a setting dominated by a large group. That social situation highlighted the importance of leadership and loyalty in the small group. Isolation, defined *per* Park and Burgess (1921) in terms of exclusion from communication, was a means of group survival. Such isolation took the form of abstaining from politics, but that was undermined by the experience in Russia of having no neighbors to staff a government. It also took the form of the refusal to serve in the military in a time of nationalism. The prohibition of intermarriage and the insistence of living in rural settings also furthered isolation, but the agricultural efficiency of America made continued rural residency impossible, and that fact made continuing the prohibition of intermarriage unlikely. While those who were the most isolated in Russia were the ones who came to Kansas, later generations would engage in accommodation and assimilation. For example, the use of High German disappeared in three generations. Janzen interprets the focus on education as a way of holding onto potential leaders, lest they attend non-Mennonite schools and leave the church. Religious activity became increasingly intense, as the sole means of maintaining the group. With this last point, Janzen comes not only to a sociological account of a distinctive religious group, but a sociology of religion.

*The Supernatural Patron in Sicilian Life*

by Charlotte Day Gower (Chapman), University of Chicago, 1928<sup>14</sup>

The dissertation essays a reconstruction of an aspect of Sicilian religious culture from the accounts of immigrants to Chicago, as well as from a

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<sup>14</sup> Born in 1902, Charlotte Day Gower earned the M.A. at the University of Chicago in 1926, writing a thesis on Antillean culture that she elaborated as a monograph published by the American Anthropological Association the next year (Chapman 1927). She wrote the Ph.D. dissertation under consideration here in the anthropology part of the University of Chicago's joint Department of Sociology and Anthropology. In the introduction, she indicates that the dissertation was a preliminary to a proposed study to be undertaken in Sicily (p. 2). She made the trip to Sicily and wrote a monograph reporting her research in 1935; however, it was not until 1971 that the 1935 manuscript found its way into print under the name Charlotte Gower Chapman (1971). She expresses in the book's introduction indebtedness to two of her professors—Fay-Cooper Cole and Edward Sapir.

25-volume Italian-language reference work on Sicilian popular culture. The author lists nineteen informants in an appendix; one can only guess how representative of Sicilian immigrants they were. For example: "A woman from Palermo. At times she is possessed by the spirit of a man who was murdered in Palermo. This spirit treats her evilly, swears at other people, and refuses to leave her body when attempts are made to drive him out. The spirit gives her no power." Thus the reader cannot know how typical of either Sicily or of Sicilian immigrants to Chicago the findings are.

The chief supernatural protector is God, seen as unitary but invoked under various titles that elaborate the Trinity of Christian tradition. The chief mediator is Mary, who is the object of devotion under various titles. Other patrons are the saints, who may or may not appear in the official Catholic list of saints. Only one angel, Michael, is treated as a saint. There are various unserious saints who do not function as patrons but rather appear in humorous stories. Unlike God, the saints do not punish and hence are not feared. Relics, holy places, and pictorial or statuary representations often play a role in the cult of saints; they are not said to be separate from the saints but are treated as such. Every saint has a specialty (protecting from accident, finding lost objects, and so on), but what a given saint's specialty is differs from one town to another. Ritual prayers often accompany appeals to saints for favors.

Town patrons specialize in town problems or figure in regular commemorations; they become associated with the towns through some historical connection, miracles, or chance discovery of a statue or picture. Children are often named for their town's patron saints, but rarely are town patrons and individuals' name saints the object of personal devotions. Similarly churches are named for saints, and confraternities, which function chiefly during feast days and funerals, maintain public spectacles in honor of their patron saints; but again these saints are rarely the objects of personal devotion. Personal devotions are frequent, but they seem to come through the influence of close relatives or come about on account of favors received.

*The Prophet—A Study in the Sociology of Leadership*  
by Samuel Clarence Kincheloe, University of Chicago, 1929<sup>15</sup>

Kincheloe's study of the prophet attempts to portray a pure type, though he makes no reference to the pure type method of Max Weber. Using illustrative cases from the great religious traditions but mostly from the history of Judaism and Christianity, he distinguishes the prophet from leaders in general, priests, poets, mystics, reformers, and messiahs. His concern is to depict the prophetic role and to identify the social processes through which a person comes to be defined as a prophet. "It is a fundamental problem to discover the processes which go on when social definition is given to whatever innate qualities the leader may have" (p. 2). The focus is thus on collective action pertaining to the relationship between the prophet and the prophet's following. No reference is made to Weber's concept of charisma. Rather, the terms of the discussion are taken from Robert E. Park's lectures on the crowd and the public (undoubtedly based on the latter's 1906 dissertation, *Masse und Publikum*) and from the section on collective behavior in Park and Burgess's *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (1924).

The prophet is thought to speak for God and is associated with moral or religious movements. Divination and ecstasy form elements of the prophetic role in ancient Israel, but as mere signs of prophetic authority. The prophet, unlike the diviner, has a following rather than a clientele. "The prophet builds public opinion by means of preaching and personal prestige" (p. 54). Kincheloe takes descriptions of the diviner role from secondary anthropological sources—Lucien Levy-Bruhl, Abraham L. Kroeber, James G. Frazer. The prophet's inspiration is analogous to that of poets, artists, and even non-fiction writers; there is a sense of a thought running its own course, with the individual merely serving as its instrument. Thus prophecy is part of a wider public discourse arriving at an insight. The prophet differs from the mystic insofar as prophecy takes the form of discourse.

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<sup>15</sup> Samuel C. Kincheloe (1890–1981) earned the B.A. at Drake University in 1916 and a Master's in religion at the University of Chicago in 1919. He taught sociology at George Williams College in Chicago from 1923 until 1928, when he accepted a post teaching sociology at the Chicago Theological Seminary. His Ph.D. dissertation in sociology at the University of Chicago is dated 1929. Most of his later works are of an applied nature, falling in the community study tradition of church sociology. He was recognized by the Religious Research Association by selection as its H. Paul Douglass lecturer in 1964.

Poetry is national speech. "The poet is a good historian, one who can make his descriptions live for his readers" (p. 116). Prophets, however, have a moral purpose, usually formulating a critique of the social order into which insight is had. Unlike the reformer, however, the prophet's concern is large and long-term while the reformer engages in immediate and nearby direct action. "The reformer feels constrained to be practical; the prophet feels constrained to be absolutely right" (p. 136). Consequently, the poet is inspired but does not lead, the reformer leads but is not inspired, while the prophet is an inspired leader. The prophet is not necessarily a messiah, however; the latter is usually a fulfillment of a past prophecy.

Kincheloe saw a connection between prophecy and social unrest. As a "collective representation," the prophet articulates the social needs that create unrest.<sup>16</sup> In a religiously pluralistic setting, the prophet may give rise to a sect. Kincheloe describes the sect and the process of sects becoming denominations, but he does not take such conceptualizations from Weber, Troeltsch, or Niebuhr. Rather, he cites Park and Burgess (1924), who develop their concept from the social movement tradition of sociology, especially the writings of Scipio Sighele, and the Master's thesis of Ruth Shonle (1923).

Developing an insight into the social injustices of society requires a "brooding" process characteristic of the introvert. However, the physical and psychic peculiarities of prophets simply help the followers fix their attention on them. Prophets often need support from intimates in order to continue despite opposition and rejection. These latter help the prophet play the role of the "stranger" for a group (p. 229, with no reference to Simmel's essay on the stranger) and help define the person as a prophet. By means of such a process the message grows naturally out of the life of the group and criticizes the group's existing order.

### *General Pattern*

The sermonic approach of Dewitt Lincoln Pelton's 1895 dissertation soon disappeared, but it cannot be said that any coherent sociology of religion had developed in the United States before 1930, based on the evidence of these dissertations. There were community studies,

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<sup>16</sup> The phrase "collective representation" certainly must be drawn from Durkheim (1915), though it is not cited as such.

demographic studies, histories of social institutions, surveys of complex organizations, and a development of a pure type—all of which paralleled developments within American sociology in general. While the earlier dissertations centered in New York and Philadelphia, the later ones were written for the University of Chicago—suggesting hegemony of that department over studies of religious phenomena in the absence of any identifiable sociology of religion.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### THE THEORETICAL TRAJECTORY

Doyle Paul Johnson

The sociology of religion can readily be traced back to the origins of sociology itself as a distinct discipline in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In those days, prior to the fragmentation of sociology into numerous subfields, religion was incorporated in general sociological analyses because it was seen as relevant in understanding society and human beings' social behavior. Among the founders of the discipline, French sociologist Émile Durkheim and German sociologist Max Weber are still recognized for their contributions in emphasizing the importance of religion in understanding modern society. Their analyses differed from those of many of their intellectual predecessors and contemporaries who tended to dismiss the significance of religion for modern society, believing it would soon be replaced by a more enlightened and scientifically informed worldview.

The continuing relevance of religion is perhaps more explicit in Durkheim's perspective than in Weber's. Durkheim (1965 [1915]) rejected the "intellectualist" approach that focused primarily on the errors of pre-scientific beliefs and argued instead that religion should be seen as an enduring expression of the collective life people experience as members of society. This basic approach, as we shall see, was incorporated into mid-twentieth century functionalism as developed by Talcott Parsons. It is also consistent with the notion of a unifying civil religion that promotes a widely shared value system among a society's members. This perspective can be criticized when applied to modern complex societies, however, for overstating the case for widespread consensus on shared values and norms.

Weber, on the other hand, was best known initially among United States sociologists for his analysis of how the Protestant work ethic reinforced and helped legitimate the rise of the capitalist economic system (Weber 1958). This work was introduced to American sociologists through Talcott Parsons's translation (published originally in 1930) of the 1920 version of Weber's essays, which itself was an expanded

version of Weber's original 1904–05 publication. For many years this thesis regarding the effects of the Protestant ethic on capitalist development was the best-known part of Weber's broader comparative analysis of how sharply the major world religions contrasted in terms of their orientation toward cultural tradition and economic innovation (Weber 1963 [1922]; 1946: 267–359). Weber emphasized, however, that religious motivations do not operate independently of economic interests. It is always an empirical question as to whether economic material interests or religious ideal interests have priority in individuals' subjective motivations, and the dividing line between the two types of motivation is often fuzzy. Moreover, Weber noted that a fully developed capitalist economic system, with its highly rationalized work ethic, no longer needs explicit religious legitimation; hence religious concerns are vulnerable to being undermined by worldly activity and the economic expansiveness and material prosperity that ensue. Nevertheless, he regarded the rationalized bureaucratic structures of modern societies with considerable pessimism because of their failure to incorporate opportunities for emotional expressiveness or discourse regarding ultimate values. In this environment, some people could be susceptible to the appeal of charismatic religious leaders who promise an ultimate meaning system and moral values that are more emotionally satisfying than the restrictive "iron cage" structures of bureaucratic rationality and technical efficiency.

*Social Action and Social Institutions in Parsons's Functional Theory*

Both Durkheim's and Weber's perspectives were incorporated into the developing theoretical discourse of United States sociology in the late 1930s through Talcott Parsons's voluntaristic theory of social action (1937). Parsons's strategy at this stage involved synthesizing insights from Durkheim and Weber, along with those of British economist Alfred Marshall and Italian sociologist Vilfredo Pareto. Durkheim's contribution included a strong emphasis on shared values, while Weber insisted on understanding individuals' subjective orientations, which may incorporate cultural ideals, particularly as they shape people's group-based material interests. Marshall represented the utilitarian perspective that concentrated on individual interests, while Pareto advocated a positivistic (or scientific) approach that focused on underlying sentiments (or residues) that are beneath the level of subjective consciousness or rational

explanation. Parsons's voluntaristic theory of social action emphasized individuals' interests being shaped by the culture and their pursuit being regulated by shared ideals and normative commitments as well as the constraints and opportunities of their environment.

This focus on shared values and norms was later incorporated into the framework for functional analysis that Parsons developed more systematically, beginning in the late 1940s (Parsons 1951, 1961, 1963, 1967; Parsons and Shils 1951). In this perspective shared cultural values are reflected in the norms governing people's actions as they perform their social roles in various institutional settings. Religion plays a major role in defining and reinforcing dominant values as well as promoting social integration and solidarity. Moreover, the differentiation of religion from other institutions enhances its ability in modern society to perform its specialized functions. Differentiation provides a degree of structural independence whereby religious organizations and leaders are able to focus on their specific religious domain as they seek to reinforce and increase the influence of religious values in society. However, this influence is often indirect and diffuse, partly because it competes with other specialized institutions that develop their own particular cultural orientations and their own interpretations of the appropriate values to endorse and promote.

In the differentiated social structures of modern society, implementation of widely professed values in the operative norms of everyday life is never complete, and interpretations of how they should be implemented may diverge in different institutional structures and segments of the population. Although religion may indeed be involved in promoting value consensus and social integration in the way Parsons proposed, religious values may also be used to criticize existing social structures and legitimate pressures for social change. Such efforts provide legitimacy to social movement leaders as they seek to mobilize resources to promote change in society. However, in a pluralistic religious environment, different religious groups may disagree among themselves on the relevant values to be emphasized or their interpretation of widely shared abstract values they may endorse.

In addition, efforts to infuse religious considerations into political debates or public policy issues on a wide scale sets the stage for conflict over the intermingling of religion and politics. Thus, for example, the social activism of liberal activist clergy in the 1960s and 1970s generated objections from conservatives. More recently, the increasing political influence of conservatives (fundamentalists and evangelicals)

has raised the ire of moderates and liberals. In theoretical terms this intermingling of religion and politics can perhaps be seen as an example of *dedifferentiation*. At another level within the framework of functional analysis, religious organizations obviously have their own economic and political dynamics as social systems in their own right, as well as being subsystems of the larger society. With institutional differentiation, the decline in the direct influence of religion, or perhaps the diffuse and contested nature of its influence, is one meaning of the widely used concept of *secularization*. Moreover, the argument regarding religion's potential influence does not necessarily mean that traditional beliefs regarding the supernatural or ultimate reality must be preserved. Instead, traditional beliefs may be reinterpreted (or demythologized) to fit a more modern or more scientific cultural worldview. In this process, such beliefs may lose their distinctive character and their capacity to serve as an unquestioned source of authority. This process can be seen as another aspect of secularization.

A central theme in Parsons's functional analysis of modern American society is that certain basic religious values have permeated the culture in a diffuse fashion so that people may be influenced by them without necessarily having a personal religious commitment or being consciously aware of the values' background influence. Thus, for example, the basic principles of democracy can be seen as supported by the Protestant belief in the "priesthood of all believers" or the more general Judeo-Christian concept of the dignity and equality of all people before God. Moreover, drawing from Weber's analysis, Parsons emphasized that certain values derived from the Protestant ethic had helped promote a strong "this-worldly" asceticism, leading to serious engagement with all aspects of "secular" life through individuals' secular occupations. This engagement with the secular world as a religious duty helps motivate efforts to promote progress in various aspects of life—an orientation that can be contrasted with a more mystical orientation or with withdrawal from the secular world.

Parsons's analysis of the role of religion in modern society was basically consistent with the ideals of the "social Gospel" movement that had emerged in the early decades of the twentieth century. This movement involved considerable revision of traditional religious beliefs so they would be more consistent with a scientifically informed worldview. It also reflected the strong American belief in the possibilities of progress through human effort—a belief shared by many early American

sociologists. However, resistance to this social Gospel movement was manifested in the rise of fundamentalism. The long-term legacy of the conflict between secular modernists and religious fundamentalists is still evident in the early years of the twenty-first century, as will be discussed below, even though the specific issues have changed. But when Parsons's theory was gaining prominence in American sociology in the middle decades of the twentieth century, fundamentalism was in a marginal position and had not yet attained the cultural and political influence that it has achieved since the 1980s. The mainstream denominations, in contrast, seemed to be more aligned with the emerging dynamics of modern society.

Even though Parsons's perspective has in many ways been relegated to the historical stage of American sociology, its implications regarding religion can be illustrated in Christian Smith's (2005) analysis of adolescents' religiosity. His data demonstrate that religion actually does make a difference in adolescents' behavior, even though the "religious" adolescents who were interviewed were unable to articulate the distinctive religious beliefs of their religious group very clearly. And leading proponents of the neo-functional revival, such as Jeffrey Alexander (1998, 2003), emphasize the importance of cultural symbols that are employed in efforts to trigger or reinforce a sense of shared value orientations for preserving the social order of civil society. However, the way the symbols are used and the relative priorities of the values promoted are often matters of serious conflict. Moreover, instead of exerting a dominant or controlling social influence, explicit religious orientations and behaviors tend to be pushed to the private sphere of personal preference and voluntary choice. Those who choose to be involved in a religious group have a huge variety of denominations from which to choose, some mainstream and others marginal, all of which are voluntary organizations and thus dependent on members' voluntary contributions. The overall outcome is that society as a whole no longer seems to be strongly integrated through widely shared religious beliefs or values or through any type of all-encompassing institutional structure whereby such beliefs might be reinforced. But at the time Parsons's functional theory was dominant, many of the mainstream religious groups in America seemed to converge in terms of the basic values they supported. This alignment gave rise to a distinctive form of patriotism and national identity that some sociologists of religion identified as America's civil religion.

*Civil Religion*

The concept of civil religion was used in the mid-1960s by Robert Bellah (1967) to emphasize the role of religion as underlying Americans' collective identity and sense of national purpose. This development was manifested in the way mainstream forms of religion became more closely aligned with the overall worldview and value system of the surrounding culture. In this process they converged in supporting widely shared American values such as democracy, individual freedom (including religious freedom), a "free enterprise" capitalist economic system, and social and technological progress. The salience of this support was no doubt greatly increased in the middle decades of the twentieth century by the international bipolar dynamics of "Cold War" tensions and conflicts between the United States and the Soviet Union. In this context, the solidarity and cultural consensus that had been stimulated by World War II could be sustained and reinforced by the opposition between America, with its long-term economic prosperity and democratic freedoms, and the plight of those living under the repressive authoritarian Communist regime of the Soviet Union with its atheistic ideology.

This development had been suggested even earlier in Will Herberg's (1983 [1955]) influential analysis of how the three major religious groups—Protestants, Catholics, and Jews—had converged in their support of increasingly homogeneous American values and the American way of life, especially in the years following World War II. Herberg did not welcome this homogenizing effect because it seemed to equate authentic religious commitment to conformity to American culture. In his view it reflected widespread secularization within the major religious groups of American society. A major part of this process was a significant decline in Protestant hostility toward Catholics and Jews. Relations among these major religious groups were now characterized by mutual tolerance and respect, with their shared American identity overshadowing differences based on religion and ethnicity.

Herberg's major argument was that identifications with either mainstream Protestantism or Catholicism or Judaism had become alternative ways for individuals to establish their identities as well as their common membership in American society. The replacement of ethnicity (or religio-ethnic identity) as the most salient basis for distinguishing people and locating them in the larger social structure resulted from a long-term process whereby immigrant groups had become assimilated

to American society. The remaining differences were now due more to religious identification than to ethnicity, but these religious identities had become alternative ways of expressing a common American identity. A large part of the decline in the conflict resulting from Protestant opposition to ethnic Catholics and Jews can be seen as the result of the shared national experience of World War II. Also, in addition to the Cold War tensions with the Soviet Union, the long-term economic prosperity of the post-war years contributed to a strong sense of national unity, while ethnic group intermarriage and the increasing numbers of their offspring in the population resulted in a corresponding decline in the salience of ethnicity as a clear marker of group membership. It was only five years after Herberg's book that the United States elected John F. Kennedy its first Catholic president—though in some circles his Catholicism was indeed a source of concern. Nevertheless, his election signaled a significant change from the previous pattern of Protestant misgivings regarding Catholics, whose position in American culture had long been marginal.

The basic idea implied by the concept of civil religion can readily be linked to Durkheim's argument regarding religion as the primary source of moral values and social integration. The theme also goes back to Alexis de Tocqueville's (2000 [1835, 1840]) observations of American society in the early years of the nineteenth century. Widely recognized iconic representations of America's civil religion include references in the Declaration of Independence to the Creator as the source of our rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" plus the "In God we trust" phrase inscribed on our currency and the "under God" phrase inserted in the pledge of allegiance to the flag. It is also reflected in the notion that it is the unique mission of the United States to serve as a moral example to other societies and to promote the ideals of democracy and individual freedom. These values were articulated, for example, by President Ronald Reagan's public references to the United States as a "city on a hill"—intended to be a source of moral inspiration, actively promoted when feasible.

On the other hand, identification with the abstract ideals of America's civil religion does not necessarily translate into unquestioning support for the economic and political status quo or prevent conflict. By the time Bellah used the concept of civil religion soon after the mid-1960s, the apparent widespread value consensus and stability in American society that Parsons sought to explain and that Herberg highlighted for America's three major faith groups had begun to be undermined.

This undermining was due both to the gradually increasing influence of the civil rights movement and to an emerging and highly volatile opposition to the Viet Nam War. A significant part of the moral fervor that animated the civil rights and anti-Viet Nam War movements of the 1960s and 1970s resulted from the realization that American society was failing to live up to its own moral ideals. During those watershed years, the critique of American society that was mounted by many of those representing the anti-establishment counterculture often went far beyond civil rights and the Viet Nam war. In addition to these issues, there was also widespread resistance to external authority structures that stifled individuals' freedom and to bureaucratic hierarchies that pursued a narrow range of pragmatic goals without regard to their moral implications. This "consciousness revolution" went so far as to raise serious questions regarding single-minded commitment to technological progress, economic growth, and consumer culture as the ultimate goals of our individual and collective lives. The use of religious beliefs and values to legitimate social protest and to engage in the struggle for social change is not new. The abolition movement that led eventually to the end of slavery in the mid-nineteenth century was also justified as a moral imperative that was mandated by widely professed religious beliefs and values. Such movements always involve conflict, with participants on both sides seeking to justify their cause in terms of their interpretations of values they claim to be widely shared as the foundation of our society—religious or otherwise.

Less than a decade after his pioneering article on civil religion, Bellah (1975) used the notion of a "broken covenant" to describe how America had been straying off course from its professed moral values. The resulting moral crisis threatened to undermine the sense of national purpose that in the past had defined the self-image of the United States, promoted a sense of national unity, and helped earn the respect and admiration of other societies. Thirty years later, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, debates about the moral character of the United States have escalated sharply for many reasons. A major example of this is the conflict resulting from the strong opposition of many patriotic Americans to the decision to invade Iraq as a serious betrayal of the underlying moral values of our society. In fact, American society can actually be described as having "two civil religions" (Wuthnow 1988: 244–47; cf. Christiano, Swatos, and Kivisto 2002: 74–75). On the one hand, there is a priestly form that promotes stability by reinforcing an image of America's divine national calling

and encouraging a smug sense of moral superiority. This type of civil religion tends to involve unquestioning patriotism and commitment to current policies. On the other hand, there is a prophetic form of civil religion that is equally patriotic but challenges our society to recognize our failures to live up to our professed moral ideals and to engage in a moral struggle to implement these values more fully.

The moral and political climate today is obviously quite different from thirty years ago. The political activism of conservative and fundamentalist religious leaders seems now to promote a vision of our national identity and its moral foundations that is much more narrow and particularistic than was articulated in the prophetic message of the liberal activists of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The key point, however, is that religion remains relevant to larger questions of social order, even though its meanings and implications are not a matter of widespread but latent consensus but instead are matters of intense debate and conflict (Hunter 1991). This public side of religion has been an important feature of public discourse in recent times and is as significant from a sociological point of view as its personal and private side (see Casanova 1996).

Functional analysis underwent a sharp decline in the 1970s, but the later emergence of neofunctionalism showed how functional analysis can avoid the one-sided conservative ideological implications that many critics saw in Parsons's perspective. Neofunctional analysis includes explicit recognition of the multidimensional nature of the complex interdependence of social action, institutional structures, and culture. Jeffrey Alexander's (2003) contributions to the sociological analysis of culture demonstrate the contingent and often contested way in which meanings and values influence social life. This applies in particular to religious meanings and values. In the pluralistic environment of the United States, public discourse is often characterized by sharp debates between those whose religious beliefs and values lead them to support the status quo and those who use their religious beliefs and values to legitimate the struggle for social change.

### *Conflict Theory and Religion*

When functionalism was dominant in American sociology during the middle years of the twentieth century, conflict theory provided an alternative perspective, although it was not nearly as influential as functional

theory at the time. Within the sociology of religion, however, conflict was implicitly recognized as an important part of the dynamics of different types of religious organizations. Analysis of sectarian religious groups, for example, has demonstrated their opposition to the surrounding culture and the dominant religious establishment. Even prior to the dominance of functionalism, J. Milton Yinger (1946) pointed out that marginal sectarian groups and better-established “church-type” groups can be contrasted in terms of the different strategies they employ in an ongoing struggle for power. The distinctions between these contrasting types of religious organizations will be reviewed more fully below.

In a pioneering analysis published even earlier, H. Richard Niebuhr (1929) demonstrated that denominational pluralism in the United States reflects clear social divisions within the population, including in particular those based on socioeconomic class, geographical region, and race. His goal was to provide a critique of the United States’s pattern of denominational pluralism for compromising the Christian ideal of unity. He described in detail the historical development of the contrast between the sectarian churches of the “disinherited” versus “middle class” churches. His analysis is consistent with Weber’s argument regarding the way religious ideals are shaped and modified to fit individuals’ socioeconomic needs and interests.

Despite the potential for a conflict theory perspective provided through these analyses of religious organizations and despite Parsons’s analysis of its function in reinforcing commonly shared values, religion was not a major focus of attention within the field of general sociological theory in the middle years of the twentieth century. Conflict and critical analysis also garnered limited attention during those years. One exception was Lewis Coser’s (1956) functionalist perspective on conflict. He showed how conflict between groups often strengthens solidarity within them, and how the development of conflict regulation mechanisms can help mitigate the destructive effects of conflict, both within and between groups. A much more critical perspective was provided in C. Wright Mills’ (1956) description of American society and its self-serving “power elite.” This perspective was explicitly opposed to Parsons’s analysis of how society’s major institutions functioned together to contribute to its survival and well-being.

Conflict and critical theory perspectives have always focused heavily on the differential distribution of resources as reflected in the socioeconomic class structure of society. Despite the absence of a well-established conflict or critical perspective in the middle decades of the twentieth

century, the importance of the socioeconomic class structure in the United States was certainly recognized, even though the emphasis in much United States sociology was on the high percentage of the population belonging to the relatively affluent middle class. Within the sociology of religion, however, class differences in religious orientation and level of organizational involvement have long been an important topic for empirical investigation, along with racial/ethnic differences (see Pope 1942; Lenski 1963; Demerath 1965; Davidson, Pyle, and Reyes 1995; Pyle 1996). Also, although people in different socioeconomic classes vary somewhat in terms of the religious groups with which they affiliate, particularly among Protestants, the larger mainstream denominations include adherents from a range of socioeconomic class levels. Moreover, the socioeconomic profiles of particular congregations are likely to vary in different regions of the country and different local community settings.

In the area of general sociological theory, the appeal of neo-Marxian and critical theories that focused explicitly on the conflicting interests that pervade society, on the persisting influence of socioeconomic class distinctions, and on the structures of domination that repress conflict were much more prevalent in Europe than in America. For example, in Lewis Althusser's (1971: 85–126) critical neo-Marxist perspective, religion was seen as part of the ideological superstructure, along with education, the mass media, and other systems of cultural production that operate to reinforce structures of economic and political domination. The situation in the United States changed with the outbreak of the anti-establishment “consciousness revolution” of the late 1960s and early 1970s as described above. During these watershed years Karl Marx's early humanistic writings became widely available, particularly among sociologists and others in academic circles, and helped focus attention on the pervasive but sometimes obscure power of the dominant cultural mentality to prevent or stifle dissent and social criticism. The neo-Marxian ideas of Frankfurt School critical theorists such as Herbert Marcuse (1966) focused heavily on the alienating effects of the culture of capitalist society and the need to challenge this mentality and encourage the struggle for liberation from oppressive structures of domination. Despite the subsequent waning of the idealism of this period, conflict and critical perspectives have become a major part of theoretical discourse, contributing in part to the decline of functionalism.

Although religion was seen implicitly as being implicated in the dominant cultural worldview, it was not a major focus of attention among

conflict and critical theorists. By the late 1960s and 1970s, however, many of the leaders of the more liberal mainstream religious groups were themselves highly sympathetic to some aspects of the message of critical theorists and were supportive of such goals as promoting civil rights, ending the Viet Nam War, reducing the repressiveness of bureaucratic systems, and expanding opportunities for the human beings to have more fulfilling lives. As Jeffrey Hadden (1969) pointed out, the stand taken by these activist clergy contributed to a growing storm within mainstream churches during those years (see also Quinley 1974). Conflict within and between religious groups may thus be intertwined in various ways with economic, political, or cultural interests in other institutional settings, even though class-based interests are not necessarily the explicit focus of attention. Moreover, the divergent and conflicting interests represented in religious groups tend to cross in various ways rather than overlap. This crisscrossing pattern helps mitigate the intensity of conflict by insuring that individuals with conflicting interests on some issues are united on others. Much of the conflict within and between religious groups involves specific religious or moral issues. Such conflict may sometimes be contained within the group without necessarily leading to significant change, or it may stimulate reform efforts. Alternatively, conflict may lead to a split within the group, with the dissatisfied segment breaking away. This process will be discussed in more detail below in connection with “church/sect” theory.

*Phenomenological Perspective on the Social Construction of Religion*

In addition to the parallel between the trajectories of functionalist theory and civil religion, another area of overlap revolves around Peter Berger’s (1967) widely cited concept of the “sacred canopy” within the sociology of religion and the general theoretical perspective of phenomenological sociology. Berger’s analysis of religion is grounded in the “social construction of reality” perspective that he developed with Thomas Luckmann (Berger and Luckmann 1966). In this perspective the interdependent relation between subjective consciousness and the sociocultural world is analyzed as a kind of ongoing dialectical process in which human beings create their sociocultural world through their interaction, but this world then constitutes the external sociocultural environment that shapes the formation of their subjective consciousness and structures their subsequent interaction. This perspective is closely

related to the symbolic interactionist emphasis on “social definitions” in influencing the way we respond to one another and to our material environment. Also, despite the difference in focus, it is congruent with Durkheim’s explanation of how our internalized moral codes are formed and reinforced in the context of participating in collective religious rituals, as well as Weber’s strategy of incorporating subjective meanings in our explanations of people’s social behavior.

A major tenet of phenomenological sociology is that we can never know the external world as it “really is” but only in terms of the underlying categories and cognitive frameworks that we use in interpreting it. Because social reality is created and maintained through human beings’ actions and interaction (as opposed to being part of the world of nature), it is inherently precarious, subject to all the contingencies and uncertainties that attend human beings’ activities and social relations. Although people may understand the importance of their own intentional activities for establishing and maintaining some aspects their social world, at another level their sense of ontological security is based on their unquestioning implicit acceptance of the notion that their basic worldview corresponds to the way things *really* are, in an objective sense, as opposed to being socially constructed and reflecting mere shared definitions. This ultimate reality is often seen as transcendent, as in many of the great religious traditions.

Berger’s (1967) concept of the “sacred canopy” underscores the way religious beliefs provide a system of ultimate meaning that anchors our underlying worldview and thereby explains and legitimates the essential features of our social world in ways that make it appear to be independent of mere human definitions and actions. The sacred canopy may include an unquestioned belief in a transcendent realm of being that is beyond the ever-changing material world and the everyday contingencies of human experience. Alternatively, the material world itself, or various features of it, may be regarded as ultimate reality or as reflecting some aspect of ultimate reality. Certain material objects may themselves be regarded as intrinsically sacred, or as embodying supernatural power and significance, or they may be seen as symbolic of a transcendent realm beyond this material world. Unquestioning acceptance of such beliefs as independent of social definitions helps compensate for their precariousness and thereby provides a sense of security that they are grounded in ultimate reality. This acceptance enables people to overcome the potential *anomie* and chaos that otherwise would undermine the taken-for-granted meaningfulness and orderliness of the world and

of human life. In particular, it is through this ultimate meaning system that people are enabled to interpret and cope with the numerous forces of destruction and evil they encounter in their lives. Even death itself may be seen as part of a cosmic or providential plan in which each individual's own personal life has ultimate meaning and purpose.

In reflecting a view of reality that is thought to be independent of human beings' actions and definitions, science may be compared to religion. Although obviously created by human beings, the scientific worldview reflects the belief that scientific inquiry discloses the nature of the world as it actually is, as opposed to how it is humanly perceived and defined. However, religion contrasts sharply with science in that religion deals explicitly with questions related to the ultimate meaning and purpose of human life. This includes the ongoing struggle to make sense of pervasive threats of destructiveness, chaos, and evil in all its forms that continually undermine human life. Religious beliefs provide interpretations of human suffering, deprivations, and frustrations, including death itself, in terms that give them ultimate significance in some larger frame of reference. Thus, for example, religious responses to the reality of death include rituals to celebrate the life and memory of the deceased as well as reinforcement of the belief that the soul continues to survive in some immaterial form despite the death of the body.

Maintaining the overarching worldview covered by this sacred canopy depends on the reinforcement provided by institutionalized "plausibility structures" that reflect and express it. In traditional societies with high levels of institutional integration and cultural homogeneity, it is feasible for most areas of social life to reflect a single worldview that reflects the dominant religious beliefs and orientations of the society. If these beliefs and orientations are supported by the political power structure, the plausibility and salience of the sacred canopy is greatly enhanced. In modern societies, however, the domains of social life that are covered by any single overarching worldview (religious or otherwise) have been considerably reduced. This results in large part from the increased institutional differentiation of modern society, which Berger saw as greatly restricting the influence of religion in mundane "secular" areas of life such as politics and economics. Instead, the expression and reinforcement of religious beliefs and orientations are restricted to the specifically religious domain, which is represented by its own specialized institutional structures, or to the private domain. As a result of the high level of differentiation in modern society, each institution seeks to develop its own meaning system, thereby undermining the plausibility of any overarching sacred canopy of beliefs or ultimate meaning

system. Thus the “sacred canopy” deteriorates and is replaced by a much more “precarious vision” (Berger 1961) that is by no means self-evident or beyond question to much of the population. In conjunction with the effects of differentiation in reducing the scope of influence of religion, widespread skepticism or rejection of religious beliefs and worldviews is another major dimension of the steady advance of the secularization process.

Even so, religious beliefs and worldviews may continue to be accepted by many in the population (Berger 1970). However, in the absence of an overarching worldview and meaning system that is largely taken for granted, it becomes necessary for individuals to choose for themselves from among alternative meaning systems, whether religious or secular, none of which can be assumed to have unquestioned plausibility for a substantial proportion of society’s members. Faced with competing alternatives some individuals may experience a sense of *anomie* or “homelessness” (Berger, Berger, and Kellner 1973), while others may find a cultural home within particular groups with which they voluntarily affiliate in their quest for meaning. While some of these groups may be alienated from the wider society, others emerge as secondary institutions or cultural movements within the structures of modern society and contribute to the affirmation of one’s self in relationship to larger collective forms of life (Heelas and Woodhead 2001). Berger clearly differed from Parsons in his analysis of the effects of the long-range process of institutional differentiation. For Parsons differentiation meant that the institutional structures of religion would be able to specialize in reinforcing widespread values grounded in religion. For Berger, by contrast, differentiation meant that religion tends to be restricted to its own particular domain, with its plausibility and influence on the rest of society thereby limited. In addition to institutional differentiation, religious pluralism was also thought by Berger to undermine the pervasive and compelling character of the beliefs and worldview represented by any single sacred canopy. When groups differ in their beliefs or overall worldview, their competing claims make it less likely that any of them will be accepted as the final authority on matters of religious faith or ultimate reality. Essentially, competition undercuts all their claims. Thus religious pluralism, like institutional differentiation, contributes to the erosion of the influence of religion in society and the steady increase in secularization.

In his critique of Berger’s perspective, James Beckford (2003: 83–86) has pointed out that traditional or premodern societies were less homogeneous than Berger’s theory implies. However, in societies in which a

dominant religion is supported by the political power structure, religious diversity may be suppressed, thereby shoring up the officially established sacred canopy (and sometimes also creating martyrs among adherents of deviant religious groups in the process). Moreover, the meaning of pluralism varies in different contexts and different types of analysis (2003: 73–102). Societies vary in terms of how open they are to pluralism, and different religious groups vary in terms of their mutual tolerance. The absence of a well-defined sacred canopy for the entire society does not necessarily prevent particular religious orientations from serving as the ultimate meaning system for their own adherents within particular subcultures. Indeed, as suggested in the market model promoted by Rodney Stark and his colleagues (which is reviewed below), a religious group's minority status may enhance its salience among its adherents as they struggle to maintain their distinctive identity and belief system in a pluralistic and indifferent or hostile society.

With its separation of church and state, the United States is notable for its cultural emphasis on religious freedom, its high level of denominational pluralism, and its acceptance of pluralism within certain (implicit) limits. There is a major difference, however, between pluralism as defined in terms of multiple organizations representing a single faith tradition and pluralism defined in terms of multiple faith traditions (Beckford 2003: 74–75). Through a large part of United States history, acceptance of pluralism applied primarily to Protestant denominations. While widespread Catholic and Jewish immigration certainly increased religious diversity, it did not immediately lead to cultural acceptance, despite official guarantees of religious freedom. As Herberg pointed out, it was not until the middle of the twentieth century that Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism were widely accepted as alternative ways of expressing a shared American identity. In the last few decades of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first century, immigration from Asian countries and the Middle East has resulted in an even broader range of religious diversity, with Hindus, Muslims, and others added to the Judeo-Christian mix (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Warner and Wittner 1998).

Despite the high level of religious pluralism in the United States, indicators of religiosity such as belief in God and attendance at religious services have long been a puzzling exception to the secularization process. Moreover, despite variations in different countries and for different religious groups, the weight of the evidence for the continuing (or growing) significance of religion in the last few decades seems to be

greater than the weight of the evidence for its decline. Berger himself (1999) has reversed his earlier position regarding the steady advance of secularization. In fact, as early as 1970 Berger expressed reservations about the eventual disappearance of religion in his argument that the experience of “signals of transcendence” seems to be a basic feature of the human condition that apparently might serve as a kind of counterweight to the secularization process.

The concept of secularization has multiple meanings including, for example, loss of the institutional authority of religion in other areas of public life and widespread skepticism or rejection of religious beliefs, and these may vary independently of one another (Shiner 1967; Tschannen 1991). Certainly there are many different processes whereby diverse aspects of the secularization process might undermine various aspects of religion (which also has multiple meanings). The specific processes that are involved may well differ in public and private life. At the level of religious organizations, adaptation to and acceptance of some aspects of the secular world may reflect efforts to enhance religion’s influence in both public and private life. Different religious organizations vary in this regard. In contrast to the established (but not well attended) churches of European societies, the ability of religious organizations to survive and thrive in a pluralistic environment where religion is a matter of voluntary choice depends on their success in satisfying individuals’ personal needs and preferences. The positive effects of market competition in a pluralistic environment is a major feature of the “new paradigm” described by R. Stephen Warner (1993). This new paradigm contrasts sharply with the assumption of steadily increasing secularization. Rejection of the secularization paradigm reverses the angle of vision, so that the American situation is now seen not as an exception but as consistent with theoretical expectations.

One strategy for religious organizations to use in seeking to attract and retain adherents who are absorbed in a largely secular culture is to move in the direction of increased secularization themselves in their programs and their symbolic meaning systems. Thus traditional beliefs and rituals are reinterpreted and revised, and various programmatic initiatives are undertaken to try to be relevant in a largely secular society. Many aspects of American civil religion may be interpreted as emerging from the converging efforts of mainstream religious organizations to maintain their relevance by legitimating and celebrating distinctive features of American culture such as the market economy, democratic government, and individual freedom. The situation has changed over the

last couple of decades, however. Mainstream Protestant churches that earlier had been successful through the accommodation pattern have been overshadowed by fundamentalist and evangelical religious groups that previously were marginalized and less accommodated. This rise in conservative forms of religion was preceded a decade or so earlier by widespread experimentation and even wider interest in new forms of religious consciousness, some strands of which were influenced by Eastern religion (see Glock and Bellah 1976; Ellwood 1994). These developments indicate the continuing relevance of religion rather than steady decline.

Matters differ in other parts of the world. Consistent with the secularization thesis, participation in religious organizations is low in most European societies. However, as Grace Davie (1994) found, a large segment of the British population claim to accept their particular versions of certain basic religious beliefs and values even though they do not participate actively in religious organizations. On the Continent both Davie (2000) and Hervieu-Léger (2000) make the point that religion forms a significant part of the cultural memory that helps maintain a sense of community even while undergoing change in the process of being adapted to new conditions. On a different front, religious fundamentalism is also a major part of the Muslim world in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, where it combines with political, economic, and more general cultural issues to contribute to an anti-Western cultural mentality, resulting in what Huntington (1996) described as a “clash of civilizations.”

Additional details of how the “new paradigm” differs from the old secularization paradigm will be described later in connection with the increasing influence of the “rational choice” perspective applied to religion. However, focusing on religious organizations is only one way to assess religion’s influence in society. Religious influence may also be manifested in terms of general cultural traditions and orientations that permeate different aspects of social life without being encapsulated within specialized institutional structures. Nevertheless, specialized religious organizations have long been a major feature of the Western Judeo-Christian tradition, and the historical development of sociology of religion in both Europe and the United States includes extensive analyses of the dynamics of different types of religious organizations. Although general sociological perspectives on formal organizations can readily be applied to religious organizations, a great part of this analysis is based on church/sect theory and its various elaborations over the years.

*Religious Organizations: Development and Elaboration of Church/Sect Theory*

H. Richard Niebuhr's contrast between the egalitarian and emotionally expressive sectarian churches of the disinherited and the more hierarchical and expressively restrained establishment-type denominations of the middle class employed a distinction that Max Weber and German theologian Ernst Troeltsch had each made between marginal sects versus established churches as alternative types of religious organization. For Weber the authority of the established church is based on its traditional organizational charisma as represented by priestly authorities. Members are born into the church-type organization, and in its pure form it seeks to encompass the entire society. Thus it tends over time to accommodate itself to the political and economic structures of society and its dominant culture. It may even draw upon political authorities to reinforce its dominant position in society and its official authority. In contrast, sectarian groups include only those who make a voluntary personal decision to join the group and are able to demonstrate their worthiness through their subjective commitment or personal religious experience. Authority is based on distinctive charismatic qualities whereby certain individuals may be seen as having spiritual "gifts" (which they and their followers regard as gifts of God) or personal characteristics that demonstrate their superior worthiness and legitimate their authority. Leaders of sectarian groups rely on their personal charismatic authority to attract and inspire followers, as opposed to being legitimated by the institutional authority of an established church. Sectarian leaders sometimes engage in a prophetic challenge to the status quo as they seek to promote reforms in the established church, which they regard as having compromised the purity of their religious ideals in the process of accommodating to the wider society. However, the authority of leaders is constrained by the fact that all members are seen as sharing, to varying degrees, the charismatic qualities that demonstrate their worthiness to participate as equals in the life of the group and to share in its governance. This individualistic source of authority is expressed in the Protestant doctrine of the "priesthood of all believers."

Despite the compromise with the surrounding "secular" society represented by the church-type organization, Ernst Troeltsch (1931 [1902], vol. 1: 331–43) saw both types of organization within Christianity as consistent with principles derived from the New Testament. The doctrine of the universal availability of God's grace to all people, regardless of their personal worthiness or subjective experience, is

reflected in the objective character of the institutionalized church-type organization. In contrast, the emphasis on personal commitment, on subjective spiritual experiences such as conversion, for example, and on the close-knit bonds created among fellow-believers give rise to the sect-type organization. Troeltsch also identified a more individualistic mystical orientation in which the goal is a subjective sense of union with the divine. For those with this orientation both the objective institutional structure of the church and the fellowship based on close-knit social bonds of the sect are secondary.

Church/sect theory includes a general model of how sectarian groups often tend to evolve into more established church-type organizations that eventually trigger the formation of new sects. This process involves a gradually increasing level of accommodation and compromise with the surrounding society. It results in part from members' secular social involvements outside the context of the sectarian group, particularly if members move up in the socioeconomic class structure or if the group becomes dominant in society. It also involves a process that formalizes beliefs, doctrines, and rituals and gradually develops rules and procedures to incorporate new members (including members' own children), select leaders, settle conflicts, manage property and finances, and handle various organizational and administrative affairs. In this process the initial purity of members' beliefs and the intensity of their experiences may decline, particularly for second and subsequent generation members.

People's positions in the socioeconomic class structure of society tend to influence their religious motivations and needs. As the organization gradually accommodates to the economic and political power structures, individuals in marginal or disprivileged positions are likely to find themselves alienated from it. In addition, if some members experience upward socioeconomic mobility, this change in the socioeconomic class composition of the membership may lead to changes in rituals or other aspects of the formal and informal organizational dynamics to reflect new higher-status cultural tastes. This is seen as one of the major reasons why the disprivileged segments of society are the most likely to become dissatisfied with established church-type organizations and to be attracted to sectarian religious groups. While this does not mean that differences in individuals' religious motivations can be explained entirely in terms of their socioeconomic class position, the way religious beliefs are used to interpret and help compensate for one's poverty or hardships may be expected to differ from the way religious beliefs are

invoked to explain and to justify and celebrate one's secular achievements and good fortune.

In addition, as suggested in Weber's (1946: 287–92) distinction between *virtuoso* forms of religiosity and the more nominal or lukewarm religiosity of the masses, people differ in the salience or intensity of their religious needs and motivations. When accommodation and compromise reach a level where some individuals' religious needs and impulses are not satisfied, this sets the stage for a sectarian breakaway. If the new breakaway group itself eventually repeats the pattern of compromise and accommodation, the cycle may subsequently repeat with still another sectarian breakaway. There are many important variations in particular cases, and not all sectarian groups develop into dominant or establishment-type churches. There are also variations in the developmental trajectories of different groups, and many religious organizations combine both church-type and sectarian characteristics. A large part of the theoretical and empirical work in the sociology of religion involves elaboration of these elementary ideas by identifying additional organizational types and subtypes as well as identifying the conditions that affect the way religious groups transform over time.

One of the first and most widely cited elaborations is Howard Becker's (1932) expansion of the original church-sect dichotomy into four types: ecclesia, denomination, sect, and cult. The *ecclesia* (the Greek and Latin word translated "church") refers to an officially established religion. It is often identified with the structure and culture of particular nation-states and typically supports the society's prevailing political and economic structure. It has a clear hierarchical organization through which religious authority is exercised. Its members are affiliated by birth, though involvement and participation may vary greatly. Established church-type organizations vary in terms of how closely they and their leaders identify with a particular society or nation-state as opposed to emphasizing a strong universal orientation and appeal. In his discussion of this issue, Yinger (1970: 262–64) distinguished between the "ecclesia" type organization that is identified with a particular society as its national church versus religious organizations that emphasize a more explicit universal orientation. For example, the Roman Catholic Church is much more of a universal church than the Anglican Church in England. But despite its universal orientation, the Roman Catholic Church is nevertheless clearly identified with specific societies such as Italy, Poland, and Columbia. Yinger also suggested that a universal church is able to accommodate its own internal sectarian tendencies

more effectively than a highly conservative national church. Its universalistic orientation makes it less likely to become, or to be seen as, a partner of the political and economic establishment of any particular society, even when it may be dominant. Thus it may be less likely to leave some segments of society feeling alienated. In addition, the religious needs of individuals with a virtuoso level of religious commitment may be accommodated in special "religious orders" that may be given special tasks to perform to express their members' commitment and also promote the church's universal mission. Yinger also contrasted established church (or ecclesia-type) organizations in terms of whether they are strongly institutionalized through a hierarchical bureaucratic structure or are more widely diffused throughout society. Consistent with Troeltsch's description of the established church, Becker's ecclesia-type organization represents a high level of institutionalization, as illustrated, for example by the Roman Catholic Church. In contrast Hinduism and Buddhism represent more diffuse types of religious orientations in the societies where they are dominant.

As a distinct type of religious organization the *denomination* may be contrasted with both the ecclesia (or national church) and the universal church in its acceptance of the principle of organizational pluralism. Instead of encompassing or dominating the entire society denominations compete for members and resources and for social influence. The United States, with its constitutional prohibition of an establishment of religion, represents the highest level of denominational pluralism within the Judeo-Christian world. In contrast to an official national church with its virtual religious monopoly, denominations tend to be tolerant of one another and often to cooperate on issues of mutual concern. Even though they may be accepting of their pluralistic environment, some denominations are more tolerant and involved in cooperative ventures than others. Other differences include, for example, their size and the distribution of their members throughout society, their socioeconomic class composition, their forms of governance and organizational structure, their doctrines and rituals, their level of compromise or accommodation to the wider society, and their level of support for the dominant economic and political structures of society. They may also have a universalistic ideology and a membership that transcends national boundaries, though they vary greatly in terms of their commitment to expand their membership in other countries as well as the distribution of their members around the world.

In contrast to marginal or sectarian groups, the major denominations in the United States are considered part of the religious mainstream. Also, despite their differences in forms of governance, denominations have highly developed bureaucratic structures and professional leadership. For all practical purposes, the offspring of members may be seen as being born into denominations, and ritualistic procedures are developed to incorporate them, but individuals may also affiliate by choice. Denominations vary in terms of the type of education and rituals that they use to incorporate new members (including the children of existing members), as well as in their outreach efforts to recruit new members. Requirements for joining and remaining in good standing are much less strict than for sectarian groups. Because they must depend on members' voluntary contributions of money and time for their survival, denominations face the challenge of trying to promote members' organizational involvement to a greater degree than established national churches that are supported by public funds. Their efforts to influence society, particularly in terms of promoting social change, must be balanced by a concern to avoid alienating their members and losing their support.

Both sects and cults are marginal religious groups. As noted above, sectarian groups have generally been seen as appealing to the disprivileged segments of society, whose members feel alienated from mainstream or established forms of religion. Although different groups vary in the specific focus of their message, their goal often is to restore the purity of religious faith and practice as it is thought to have existed in the past. This implies a rejection of the compromises and patterns of accommodation to the wider society that they see reflected in the church-type organization and an effort to restore the authority and pristine purity of the original religious ideals and practices.

In contrast to sects, the cult in Becker's typology reflects a novel type of religious orientation that offers an individualistic alternative to conventional or traditional forms of religious belief and practice. It may incorporate some aspects of traditional beliefs (often with new interpretations), or it may include a blend of contemporary ideas, some of which may be combined in novel ways with traditional beliefs. In contrast to both established churches (and denominations) and sects, cultic groups tend to be amorphous and loosely organized. Participants may be attracted to particular charismatic leaders, but leadership is somewhat fluid and the authority structure is not sharply defined. The

cult-type orientation is similar in some ways to Troeltsch's mysticism type. However, instead of withdrawing from worldly concerns to focus on their religious lives, cult adherents may seek to use their special knowledge and insights to adapt more successfully to the larger world. Some aspects of Becker's cult characteristics may be illustrated by contemporary New Age orientations and practices (Heelas 1996) as well as by more traditional meditation techniques. In addition to cultic movements that emerge outside established religious groups, cultic patterns may also emerge within established (church-type) organizations among adherents who develop a strong sense of devotion to, or a subjective relationship with, a particular sacred figure, such as the Virgin Mary or a particular saint. The concept of *cult* in Becker's four-fold typology differs sharply from the more recent popular image of *cult* as used by journalists, anti-cult leaders, and others to describe deviant types of new religious movements in the 1960s and 1970s (Richardson 1993). In this later definition, the concept refers to tightly organized religious groups that are controlled by a highly authoritarian leader who may sometimes be abusive to followers, partly through manipulating them into positions of dependency, emotional and otherwise.

Considerable attention has been focused on different types of sectarian groups. Despite the early emphasis on the evolution of sect-type groups into church-type organizations, it is clear that not all of them go through this process. Some fail to survive beyond their first generation. Others continue but retain many of their original sectarian characteristics, even while undergoing change in other characteristics. For example, they may retain their sense of tension with the dominant forms of religion or the secular social order even as they develop their own organizational routines and rituals, explicit rules of membership, a well-established hierarchy of authority, and procedures for decision-making and settling conflicts. Such variations suggest important questions regarding the specific organizational and ideological dynamics that lead sectarian groups to develop in one direction or another, or to retain their sectarian characteristics. Efforts to answer such questions have resulted in the delineation of sectarian organizational subtypes. Yinger (1970: 268–69) described the “established sect” as intermediate between the “pure” sect (with its distinctive patterns exhibited most clearly by first-generation members) and the denomination. The established sect is likely to have more formalized and more stable organizational procedures than the pure first-generation sect, and its membership rules may be relaxed somewhat, partly to accommodate the sometimes lower

levels of commitment of the next generation. Even so, there may be continuing tension with more mainstream forms of religion and with the established social order, and the group is still marginal in the overall religious landscape. In Yinger's perspective, groups that focus on the need for personal transformation, such as through conversion, are more likely to evolve into denominations, while those that criticize the social order and seek to promote structural change in society are more likely to develop into established sects. Thus he contrasts the transformation of Methodists in the United States from a sect to a denomination with the persistence of the Quakers as an established sect (see also Brewer 1952). Also relevant in this connection is Finke and Stark's (1992: 145–98) portrayal of the contrast between Methodists and Baptists in their analysis of the historical trajectories of these denominations in America. Briefly, the Methodists went much farther than the Baptists in accommodating modern culture.

Four subtypes of sects widely used by American sociologists of religion were distinguished by Bryan Wilson (1959): conversionist, adventist, introversionist, and gnostic. Conversionist sects seek to promote individual conversion experiences; in their view needed social reforms will occur in society only through the actions of transformed individuals. Adventist sects espouse a millenarian ideology that anticipates the end of the world as we know it (typically through the return of Jesus Christ); thus their orientation toward the present social world is pessimistic. Introversionist sects devote themselves to inward piety and spiritual growth, withdrawing as much as possible from the world and efforts to change it. Gnostic sects emphasize specialized knowledge that will enable them to live more fully and effectively in this world. The type of sect that is most likely to go through sect-to-church transformation is the conversionist type. This orientation creates pressure to modify the group's ideology and expectations for members so as to be more appealing to potential converts. If successful, the additional recruits are likely to add additional pressure for the group to become even more accommodated to the wider society. In contrast, the challenge for adventist groups is to define the time period in which their predictions regarding the end of the world will come to pass and then reinterpret these doctrines when the predictions fail (Beckford 1975). Introversionist groups and gnostic groups are less likely to undergo organizational or ideological transformation, since their focus is individual piety or enlightenment, not organizational growth or social change. Each type of group faces its own distinctive challenges, however, and some groups

may combine aspects of more than one of these dominant orientations. For example, the Children of God (a.k.a. the Family of Love and the Family) had strong adventist beliefs along with a strong emphasis on the need for conversion in preparation for the return of Jesus Christ, the end of the world, and the divine establishment of a new world (Van Zandt 1991; Chancellor 2000).

Yinger's (1970: 273–79) identification of three distinct subtypes of sects provides yet another example of how variations in sectarian organizations have been identified and analyzed. In his perspective “acceptance sects” are oriented toward higher levels of personal religious commitment and insight but do not seek fundamental changes in the social order. In contrast to the original image of sectarian members as being from the lower socioeconomic levels of society, acceptance sects attract people who are middle class or are upwardly mobile. “Aggressive sects” attempt to expand their influence and control, and this may be expressed through the recruitment of new members (as in Wilson's conversionist sects), insistence that their members withdraw from society in preparation for the end of the world (as in Wilson's adventist sects), or aggressive promotion of revolutionary social change. “Avoidance sects” also tend to withdraw from society, but their goal is not to prepare for the end of the world but to promote personal piety and spiritual growth.

In distinguishing different types of religious groups, both internal and external factors are important to consider. Internal factors include cultural characteristics such as beliefs and ideology (including orientations toward the surrounding society and other religious groups) plus organizational characteristics such as authority structure, level of member commitment, and material resources. External factors would include the level of tolerance or opposition by the rest of society (including in particular the political authorities and other religious groups), degree of congruence with the dominant culture, and relative size in relation to the overall population. At the local level, the distinctive characteristics of religious groups may be affected by their majority or minority status. Muslims are dominant in the Middle East but not in the United States. Among Christian groups in the United States, Southern Baptists are a minority in New England but dominant in the South. In contrast, the proportion of Roman Catholics is higher in Boston, Massachusetts than in Nashville, Tennessee. Swatos (1979) demonstrated how the Anglican Church in England was almost entirely transformed into a denomination in the pluralistic American context. Differences in majority or minority group status in particular areas likely correlate to local internal and

external characteristics that overlap with key distinctions highlighted in church/sect theory.

Not all of the criteria used to distinguish different types of religious organization are of equal importance. Benton Johnson (1963) proposed degree of accommodation to the wider society as the most crucial variable for distinguishing religious organizations. There are different levels and types of accommodation, of course, and Johnson (1961) had suggested earlier that Holiness sects actually socialized their members into dominant middle-class values, despite the marginal status of such groups. In any case, in addition to contrasting well-established churches and denominations with marginal sectarian and cultic groups, this focus allows for additional distinctions within these broad categories as well. It is also useful, for example, to compare and contrast religious groups with regard to their willingness to accept and cooperate with one another. Level of accommodation may itself be expected to reflect the wider environmental context. Thus Swatos (1975) explicitly identified monopolism or pluralism of the wider religious context as being related to a religious organization's orientation to the environment (see also Christiano, Swatos, and Kivisto 2002: 97–99). Church-type organizations and denominations are both accepting of the wider environment, but the church-type has a virtual monopoly position in terms of legitimate dominance in its environment. Sectarian groups that survive in a monopolistic environment are seen as entrenched and are likely to maintain their oppositional stance, while those in a pluralistic (and presumably more tolerant) environment are classified as dynamic sects (and thus may evolve into a different form).

In the next section, some of these variations in the characteristics and dynamics of religious organizations will be analyzed in terms of the rational choice theoretical perspective as applied to religious markets. This perspective is closely related to the “new paradigm” in the sociology of religion that has developed over the last couple of decades and stands in opposition to many of the basic assumptions of the old “secularization” paradigm. The success of religious organizations in this perspective is explained in terms of how effective they are in satisfying the religious preferences of their constituents.

*The New Paradigm: Application of Rational Choice Theory to Religion*

Underlying the rational choice perspective is the utilitarian notion that individuals' behaviors reflect their efforts to maximum the benefits they

receive in exchange for the costs they are able and willing to pay. As noted earlier, Talcott Parsons had criticized the individualistic utilitarian perspective in developing his own theory of social action in the late 1930s because of its failure to incorporate the shared values that influence the formation of individuals' interests and the norms that regulate their pursuit. By the 1960s, however, Parsons's functional theory came under strong criticism for emphasizing value consensus and society's functional requirements. Partly in reaction to Parsons's functional theory, social exchange theory developed as an alternative that focused explicitly on explaining human behavior in individual cost/reward terms (Homans 1961; Blau 1964). This focus was eventually incorporated into the newer rational choice perspective, which Michael Hechter (1987) used to explain group solidarity and which James Coleman (1990) developed in a systematic way to apply to all aspects of the social world, both micro and macro.

In applying this rational choice perspective to religion Stark and Finke (2000) argued explicitly against the notion that religion is irrational. Instead, all human behavior is regarded as rational within the limits of human knowledge and understanding. As applied to religion this argument goes counter to the assumption of most of the early pioneers in the sociology of religion (and many of their successors as well) that religious beliefs are basically non-rational (or irrational). Focusing heavily on the cognitive functions of religion in providing explanations of the world of nature and human experience, these early theorists assumed that religious beliefs would lose their credibility in the more enlightened scientific age they believed was dawning. It was these assumptions regarding the irrationality of religious beliefs that provided the foundation for widespread acceptance of secularization theory.

Rational choice theory sees religion as involving exchange transactions with a god or gods whereby human beings seek to acquire benefits that are not available from human exchange partners. The existence of a god or gods who are willing and able to be involved as exchange partners with humans is, of course, a matter of faith—a faith sustained through social definitions. As Stark and Finke (2000: 39–41) point out, religious teachings include explicit promises of blessings the faithful will receive in exchange for their faithfulness as well as the costs they may otherwise incur. For those who accept these beliefs, the rational course of action is to pay one's religious dues and be rewarded rather than suffer the negative consequences. The benefits expected through religion include some that do not exist in the material world and are not subject to

empirical confirmation or disconfirmation; that is, they literally depend on faith. The belief in life beyond death is perhaps the most obvious example, but individuals may also have faith in future benefits, both tangible and intangible, that will accrue in the indefinite future in this life as well. Individuals may also receive immediate rewards, including, for example, positive emotional reinforcement such as peace of mind, confidence in the face of adversity, or a subjective sense of oneness with God or the infinite. On a more general level, as indicated earlier in connection with Berger's perspective, religious beliefs provide an ultimate meaning system that helps people cope with frustrations and gives them a sense of purpose and significance. Interaction with fellow believers and participating with them in ritual activities reinforces such beliefs and orientations, despite the lack of empirical evidence. In addition, other benefits may emerge as a kind of byproduct, including emotional support, useful social contacts, etc. The scope of this perspective can be illustrated by Stark's (1996) application of it to the history of the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire.

As with any exchange relation, there are costs involved as well. These may include fulfillment of various religious obligations and compliance with norms and moral codes that require or prohibit various forms of behavior. For those involved in religious organizations, these costs also include the time and energy required for participation in shared rituals or other organizational activities as well as financial contributions. However, despite the widely accepted assumption of an intrinsic link between religion and morality, the question of whether or not religion promotes moral behavior or helps sustain the moral foundations of society depends on the nature of the god in whom people believe (Stark 2001). Stark pointed out that if gods are believed to be limited in power and scope, capricious and undependable, unresponsive to humans, unconcerned about their behavior, or immoral themselves, they are not likely to inspire individuals to make efforts to engage in high-cost exchange relations with them, or to adhere to their moral codes or make sacrifices for their glory. The same result occurs if the supernatural is defined in vague impersonal terms (such as the "ground of our being"). Instead, religion has the potential for reinforcing moral codes if the God in whom adherents believe is a conscious, rational supernatural being who is powerful, responsive, and dependable, and who demands an exclusive commitment through which individuals are promised rewards (or blessings) in accordance with their adherence to the divine will, despite the costs that may be involved.

But even when beliefs in the possibility of beneficial exchanges are widespread, people vary greatly in terms of the level of costs they are willing to incur. The strategy for some people is to minimize or delay the costs as much as possible without running the risk of forfeiting the minimal level of benefits regarded as crucial. On the other hand, some individuals may devote their lives to high levels of self-denial (asceticism) for the sake of their faith; while they may not be consciously oriented toward personal rewards, they nevertheless experience a rewarding sense of personal fulfillment from their total commitment to the divine will.

This focus on the benefits of religion was foreshadowed by Glock and Stark's (1965: 246–59) early explanation of the appeal of religion to those experiencing various forms of deprivation. As noted earlier, socioeconomic deprivations had been seen by Niebuhr as underlying the appeal of sectarian religious groups. Glock and Stark expanded the notion of deprivation to include social, organismic (or health), ethical, and psychic forms of deprivation. Their argument was that different types of deprivation may trigger the rise of different types of religious organizations. Thus, for example, while economic deprivation may lead to the formation of sectarian groups, ethical deprivation is likely to stimulate reform movements and organismic deprivation to healing movements. Alternatively, efforts to cope with deprivation may involve secular types of activity. But the underlying theoretical idea is that religious responses to deprivation may take different forms, depending on the type of deprivation.

The same theme of compensation also provided the foundation for Stark and Bainbridge's (1987) general theory of religion. In this expanded perspective, deprivation is not limited to specific groups or categories of people (such as members of the lower socioeconomic class) but instead is widespread among humans whenever their ideals and aspirations are beyond their reach. For example, all humans face the ultimate deprivation of life itself through death. In addition, there are many other areas in which people's ideals and goals are far beyond what they can realistically hope to achieve. Faced with widespread experiences of deprivation, human beings find various compensations in their religious faith that serve as substitutes for their real interests. But in the expanded rational choice perspective that Stark and his colleagues eventually developed, the tone seems to shift toward the view that religion provides *real* benefits that are highly valued for their own sake, as opposed to mere *compensatory* benefits that serve as a kind

of “consolation prize.” This expanded and greatly elaborated rational choice theory contributed significantly to the decline in the dominance of the secularization paradigm and to a new approach in researching and evaluating the role of religion in individuals’ lives and in society.

There are challenges, of course, in applying an economic cost/benefit analysis to nonmaterial exchanges involving intangibles without an objective measure of value. The positive emotional reinforcement individuals experience from their religious activities are difficult to quantify in ways that would allow precise and objective comparison with the costs that are involved, including, for example, the negative emotional reactions that might result from failure to perform such activities. In addition, costs and rewards may sometimes be difficult to distinguish. For example, spending one’s time in personal prayer or in attendance at a worship service might be regarded by a rational choice theorist as a cost, since time is a scarce resource, and there are the inevitable opportunity costs of other options that could have been selected. However, like lovers who regard their time together as highly rewarding, those who engage regularly in private or public rituals may find the experience to be highly rewarding, not costly. One could counter that the rewards must obviously outweigh the costs (or else a different choice would be made)—but it is the rational choice theorist who counts the time spent and opportunities foregone as a cost, not the religious devotee. In such situations, costs and rewards are so closely linked that the “costs” are subjectively experienced as rewards.

One major benefit of the new rational choice paradigm is the way it can be used to help explain the dynamics of religious organizations in a pluralistic (and thereby competitive) religious economy. In the United States or other societies where churches lack state support, large permanent endowments, or other resources of their own, clergy and other leaders of religious organizations must adopt strategies of marketing themselves to members and potential recruits by satisfying their various religious preferences (and perhaps other preferences as well) in exchange for their support. Thus the relatively high level of religious participation in the United States compared to European societies can be explained as resulting from the deliberate strategies that different religious leaders in a pluralistic environment use to appeal to people with varying needs and preferences. Finke and Stark (1992) applied this perspective to the history of organized religious participation in the United States. They showed how the upstart sects that employed aggressive marketing techniques suited to the American frontier eventually became part of

the American mainstream, partially eclipsing the older, better established denominations in the process. In comparison to churches with an established, tax-supported monopoly, in a religious economy where different religious organizations appeal to different niches, more people will be able to satisfy their religious preferences in the religious group of their choice, thereby earning a favorable “return” on their investments of money, time, and emotional energy.

Different types of religious organizations may be seen as using different strategies in terms of the level of costs and rewards that are exchanged. At the risk of oversimplification, this perspective can be related to the contrast between mainstream Protestant denominations in the United States and more conservative (fundamentalist or evangelical) groups. Although members of religious groups of all types may be encouraged to commit as much time, energy, and material resources as possible, the implicitly accepted strategy in many mainline denominations is to accept limited levels of commitment and contributions from a larger number of members while allowing them to remain in good standing. Free-riding is likely to be formally discouraged, but the fact that many members have numerous involvements outside their religious group, both social and financial, is taken into consideration. Members who keep their costs low presumably are satisfied to receive fewer rewards in exchange than those who contribute more and receive greater rewards. In contrast, sectarian groups are likely to make high demands on all their members for them to be in good standing, but they promise high rewards in return. The contemporary appeal of strict churches with sectarian characteristics may seem paradoxical from one perspective because of the greater demands they place on members (see Kelley 1972), and their growth certainly seems to be inconsistent with the assumption of steadily increasing secularization. But in the rational choice perspective such groups offer distinctive rewards that are not available in the secular world or in highly accommodated mainstream churches; thus their adherents are willing to incur the higher costs that are required to obtain such rewards and thereby satisfy their particular religious preferences (Iannaccone 1994).

From an organizational point of view, members’ contributions of time, money, and emotional energy provide resources that can be used to reward members and thereby increase their dependency on the group. An extremely high level of such dependency relations can be seen in those communal groups in which members are expected to surrender all their worldly possessions as well as sever their outside social ties and

become totally dependent on the group to meet their material needs as well as their social, emotional, and spiritual needs. A group's willingness to accept members with lower levels of commitment might be seen as reflecting a compromise between opposing goals. While the group (especially its leaders) may be desirous of having its members contribute as much as possible in exchange for the rewards they receive, they may settle for less as they seek to enhance their appeal among more people. If this strategy is successful, the group eventually becomes too large for its members to engage in informal mutual surveillance of one another's contributions. Members with lower commitment levels may then find it tempting to free-ride because of the low risk of serious negative sanctions, especially if the rewards they desire are minimal.

The effort to promote the formation of socio-emotional bonds by insuring that all new members are incorporated in small groups reflecting their particular interests or demographic profile can help compensate for these negative effects of large size. The use of such a strategy by large churches that have experienced rapid growth helps insure a high level of mutual surveillance, thereby increasing the costs of free-riding, while at the same time increasing the opportunities for members to engage in mutually rewarding socio-emotional exchanges. At the same time, the effort to entice and retain members by providing assurances that their particular needs and interests will be satisfied in a small group setting provides an opening for increasing accommodation to the wider society (Sargeant 2000).

The strong individualistic assumptions of the rational choice model seem to fit the high level of individualism in the United States (see Hammond 1992; Roof 1999). On the other hand, despite widespread acceptance of the pattern of freedom of choice in the area of religion, this market model is not consistent with the widely shared ideal of religion as a foundation for a moral community in which individuals are challenged to transcend their individual interests for the good of their community and the welfare of all its members (Wuthnow 1995; Johnson 2003). Many members of religious groups no doubt fail to transcend their personal interests in this way. But when individuals do manage to act in terms of the welfare of their community and its members, it usually turns out that they are rewarded for doing so (see Wuthnow 1991). These rewards include a sense of belonging and sharing with others in the collective life of the community and its welfare, expression of one's personal ideals, and receiving the gratitude of fellow-members.

*The Religious Market, Cultural Conflict, and Individualism*

In the cultural climate of the last few decades of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first (in contrast to the 1950s and early 1960s), conservative (evangelical and fundamentalist) religious groups in the United States have fared better than mainstream (moderate or liberal) Protestant denominations in terms of membership trends and social influence. Although demographic factors such as age structure and birth rates are certainly involved in patterns of membership growth and decline, the contrasting ideological orientations of conservative versus mainstream groups seem to have opposing effects on their ability to retain the loyalty of current members and their children as well as attract new members. In addition, instead of supporting an overarching value system or widely shared civil religion, the various denominations represented by these contrasting ideological categories appear today to be divided into opposing moral communities—also a sharp contrast with the high level of cultural homogeneity of the 1950s and early 1960s.

Various dimensions of the conflict between religious conservatives (fundamentalists and evangelicals) and those with more moderate or liberal orientations have been described as “the struggle for America’s soul” in Robert Wuthnow’s (1989) book by that title. These two contrasting orientations parallel James Davison Hunter’s (1991) thesis regarding the “culture wars” (also his book title) being waged between progressives and traditionalists in contemporary society, with progressives including an increasing number of “secularists” with moral commitments that in many ways do not seem to differ greatly from those of many members of moderate or liberal religious groups. Essentially, progressives tend to reject external authority structures and to insist that each individual is entitled to follow the moral code of his or her choice as long as it is subjectively rational to the individual (and the rights of all to follow their own personal subjective rationality are respected). Conservatives, in contrast, accept the notion of a transcendent and morally binding external authority as interpreted through the teachings of their particular religious group. This cultural conflict is manifested in debates on issues involving the family (such as abortion and gender roles, for example), education (in areas such as values to be taught, science education, and school prayer), the mass media and artistic expression, and interpretations of law in court decisions regarding church/state relations, for example.

The leaders and public spokespersons on both sides of the current cultural divide are, of course, more polarized than the vast majority of

the public at large. Also, as Marsha Witten (1993) demonstrated, the style of discourse she discovered in both Presbyterian and the Southern Baptist sermons reflected a strong individualistic focus on psychological and emotional well-being. While both the liberal Presbyterian and the conservative Southern Baptist sermons reflected various strategies of accommodation to the dominant culture, there were themes of resistance as well. Nevertheless, the prevalence of moral and political conflicts, coupled with the high level of subcultural pluralism in American society, make the metaphor of an overarching and unifying “sacred canopy” inappropriate. Instead, Hunter’s perspective suggests at least two broad canopies that are on opposite sides with regard to many issues, but with lots of variations in how they appear to different people. In addition, there may be smaller-scale canopies, some of which may be included under one of the two broad canopies as subcanopies, while others exist independently of them. Also, the high individualism of our culture implies that many people may be “uncanopied”—or perhaps unaware of sharing a canopy with others who may be like-minded.

With their acceptance of a transcendental source of ultimate moral authority, the conservative canopy may well be more sharply defined than the progressive canopy with its tolerant pluralism, especially in view of the high level of political influence of evangelicals and fundamentalists in recent years. Religious groups that insist on a transcendent or divine source of authority, clearly defined beliefs, and strict moral codes have a strong appeal for those who share this worldview, especially when such views appear to be threatened, and the high levels of normative commitment they stimulate contribute significantly to their organizational strength (Kelley 1972). Moreover, as indicated in Iannaccone’s rational choice argument (1994), the contributions that strict churches receive from their devoted adherents provide resources that can be used to enhance their organizational strength as well as reward members and thereby strengthen their commitment. Their clearly defined cognitive and moral boundaries and higher commitment levels differentiate conservative religious groups from more moderate or liberal mainstream groups. The tolerant and pluralistic orientation of mainstream denominations runs the risk that the benefits they offer are not seen as sufficiently distinctive and valuable to motivate their members to continue their contributions at the same level. Thus the strength of strict conservative churches can be contrasted with the “vanishing boundaries” theme of mainstream Presbyterians as portrayed by Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens (1994). Of course, there is a range of

commitment and contribution levels in mainstream churches—a range that is probably higher than in the more strict churches.

It should be noted, too, that both conservative and mainstream groups may reflect ambivalent orientations toward various aspects of their cultural environment. Conservatives do not completely reject the surrounding secular culture, nor are they totally opposed to the status quo in such areas as politics or economics. Many conservative groups tend to be highly accommodated to their cultural environment in their support of the basic structure of the capitalist economic system and their opposition to expanded government interference with it. Many of them also tend to accept the basic patterns of the consumer culture and to regard individuals' financial success as a reflection of their moral standing. In addition, their efforts to influence public opinion and political policies or to attract more members make extensive use of modern communication and marketing technologies—material tools of the secular culture. On the other hand, many members and leaders of moderate or liberal groups are critical of various aspects of modern culture and of current political and economic policies. One of the main differences between conservatives and liberals has to do with whether they focus on issues involving personal morality or public policy issues. Many of the leaders of mainline moderate or liberal denominations tend to focus on macro-level public policy issues in supporting increased government involvement in such areas as alleviating poverty, insuring individual rights, expanding opportunities for the underprivileged, and collaborating with other countries in developing policies to decrease militarism in international relations. In contrast, conservative groups tend to emphasize issues of personal morality, particularly with regard to sexuality and family issues. They also are involved in efforts to oppose policies that they regard as expanding the reach of secular culture and restricting explicit references to religion in such areas as education and public ceremonies and displays. Also, even though conservatives tend to oppose excessive government regulation of the economy, they are more willing than liberals for government to get involved in enforcing personal morality and preserving and promoting explicit references to their version of the religious foundations of American society.

On another level, however, on both sides of the cultural conflict described by Hunter, American culture is permeated by a high level of individualism. Even when individuals consider themselves loyal members of the religious group of their choice, they reserve for themselves the right to decide which beliefs and practices to accept for themselves and

which to reject. Phillip Hammond (1992) characterized this contemporary high level of personal autonomy as another major stage in the long-term American process of religious disestablishment. Similarly, Wade Clark Roof (1999) used the individualistic concept of the “marketplace” to describe the highly personal journeys that many of the religious seekers of the baby boom generation have taken in their quest for spiritual (or psychological or emotional) fulfillment (see also Roof 1993). Various organizational and cultural resources may be utilized in this quest but, in the final analysis, individuals tend to insist on deciding for themselves which specific beliefs and practices are meaningful for them personally. The result is that there may be great differences among those who identify with the same religious organization.

Certainly a great deal of heterogeneity exists within the major religious groups in American society in terms of which religious beliefs and practices are most salient and which moral codes generate the most conflict. Thus, for example, some Catholics consider themselves loyal even though they may oppose their church’s teaching regarding birth control or the prohibition of women priests. Similarly, members of mainstream Protestant churches may disagree regarding such issues as abortion or the legal rights of gays and lesbians, while conservative Protestants may differ among themselves in their views regarding women’s roles in family and church settings and drinking beer and wine in moderation. This diversity is no doubt greater in mainstream moderate and liberal groups than in conservative (evangelical or fundamentalist) groups. Within the ideological framework of both groups, however, there is typically a strong emphasis on the need to respect or tolerate individual differences in interpretation with regard to many issues of doctrine and morals—at least within certain limits. However, the range of tolerance varies for different groups as well as the specific issues where tolerance is expected and encouraged as opposed to those that trigger intolerance.

This high level of individualism in American religion and culture in general is highly consistent with the individualistic implications of the rational choice perspective. On the other hand, tolerance for diversity may be seen as providing the potential for a new and distinctive type of moral community. The high level of subcultural diversity in America may render such a concept highly appealing as an alternative to the continuation of cultural warfare (Wuthnow 1998). Ironically, however, such a community would seem to require that tolerance not be extended to those who insist on enforcing their own exclusive vision of the type

of moral code that should constitute the foundation for our collective life—an outcome that would insure the continuation of cultural conflict. It is a challenge to theorize regarding this dilemma, even though its practical resolution is elusive.

### *Summary*

The theoretical trajectory in American sociology of religion has been compared in this chapter with parallel developments in the general field of sociological theory. Despite Emile Durkheim's and Max Weber's early recognition of the importance of religion in understanding modern society, from the beginning of the field and through most of the twentieth century, the secularization process was seen by many sociologists, including sociologists of religion, as inevitable and virtually irreversible in the long run. This secularization paradigm has been rejected by many sociologists of religion in the last decades of the twentieth century, however, or its meaning has been modified in ways that clarify and delimit its relevance and scope.

The functionalist theoretical perspective as developed by Talcott Parsons that dominated sociological theory in the middle of the twentieth century continued his earlier emphasis on the way social actions are governed by shared values and norms. Religion in this perspective reinforces these shared values and norms and thereby promotes social solidarity and integration. However, religion's influence may be in the background in modern society, and traditional beliefs may be modified to fit the cognitive framework of modern culture. Moreover, religious values can also be a source of conflict when used to criticize existing social structures and to legitimate changes intended to implement these ideals more fully.

The concept of "civil religion" in the sociology of religion is similar to Parsons's theoretical perspective in terms of its focus on the reinforcement of widely shared values that support the dominant institutional patterns of American society. In the middle decades of the twentieth century the major religious groups in American society (Protestants, Catholics, and Jews) tended to converge in their support of this distinctively American civil religion. However, in addition to reinforcing and celebrating the American way of life in its current form, the ideals of civil religion can also be used as a source of social criticism and as a challenge to live up to these ideals more fully.

Prior to the emergence of a systematic conflict theory perspective, the potential for such a perspective in the sociology of religion can be seen in the contrast between sectarian religious groups that appealed to the lower and working class segments of society and mainstream churches. But during the watershed years of the late 1960s and 1970s, conflict and critical theoretical perspectives became increasingly important in sociological theory as a major alternative to functionalism. However, religion was not the major focus of this development, except for being included implicitly in the “anti-establishment” perspectives promoted in the social movements of the time. Moreover, the clergy in some mainstream churches were themselves supportive of the civil rights and anti-Viet Nam War movements of that time and thereby contributed to internal conflict within their churches.

In contrast to the macro-level focus of both functionalist theory and conflict theory, phenomenological sociology and symbolic interaction theory focus heavily on the social definitions shared on the micro level that are developed through interaction as they contribute to the construction of the external social world and the formation of individual consciousness. This basic perspective was the foundation for Peter Berger’s analysis of religion as a kind of “sacred canopy” whereby the sociocultural world that people construct is seen as grounded in an objective and transcendent reality that is independent of their social definitions. In modern society, however, the metaphor of an overarching sacred canopy does not seem plausible because of the high levels of institutional differentiation and religious pluralism. In place of a single sacred canopy, modern societies are characterized by multiple meaning systems from among which individuals make their own personal choices.

Religious pluralism is clearly expressed in the great variety of religious organizations in our society. Our discussion of religious organizations focused on the contrast between marginal sectarian and cultic groups on the one hand and national and universal church-type organizations and mainstream denominations on the other. Much analysis has concentrated on the crucial distinctions among different types and subtypes of religious organizations, and on the process whereby religious organizations may evolve from sect-type to church-type. The level of commitment expected of members and degree of accommodation to the larger society are two key distinctions that influence these dynamics.

The long-term success of the pattern of denominational pluralism that exists in the United States has long been a puzzling anomaly to sociologists of religion who believed that the steady advance of secularization would inevitably result in the continued long-term decline in religion. The growing strength of strict churches in this pluralistic environment is also inconsistent with the secularization paradigm. These and other indicators of the continuing resilience of religion have helped stimulate and reinforce the emergence of a new paradigm in the sociology of religion.

Closely related to this new paradigm is the rational choice theoretical perspective as applied by Rodney Stark and others to individuals' religious commitment and to religious organizations. This perspective emphasizes the personal benefits individuals derive from religion in exchange for the costs that are involved. Thus, strict churches are seen as providing rewards to their members that are not widely available elsewhere and that their members value sufficiently to incur the relatively high costs required to obtain them. Overall involvement in religious organizations should be expected to be higher in a society with a pluralistic religious market than in a society dominated by a religious monopoly. This is because the wide variety of styles of religious expression offered by different organizational suppliers in a pluralistic market makes it possible for a wide range of religious tastes and preferences among potential consumers in the population to be satisfied.

The ability of individuals in a pluralistic religious environment to make their own personal choices in the area of religious affiliation (or to choose not to affiliate) clearly reflects American individualism and the religious freedom that has long been a cherished element of our cultural heritage. The rational choice perspective and the market model are themselves consistent with this aspect of American culture. In recent years, however, this individualism is reflected in the increasing numbers who choose not to affiliate with any organized religion, who affiliate with new forms that are distinctively different from mainstream forms, and who reserve for themselves the right to accept or reject the teachings and practices of the group with which they do affiliate.

Although many people no doubt receive considerable cognitive, emotional, and moral support from like-minded others (whether members of a religious group or not), it may be said, without too much exaggeration, that perhaps one of the most important of the shared values we cherish is protection of our right to "be ourselves," even if this means being different from everyone else. If so, our challenge

may be to insure that “being ourselves” includes being responsible members of our community, and also that the rights of others to “be themselves” in responsible ways is respected and encouraged. Despite the high individualism of our culture, religious groups that are able to develop an inclusive sense of community, plus a clear commitment to values that transcend mere self-satisfaction, may have the potential to promote concern for the general welfare in ways that enhance and expand their members’ identities and interests beyond their own individual needs and private lives.

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### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE PROTESTANT ETHIC THESIS AS *AMERICAN* SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

William H. Swatos, Jr., and Peter Kivisto

No essay in the sociology of religion has generated a greater output of research and debate than *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* that Talcott Parsons's translation brought to Anglo-America in 1930, something Parsons himself recognized when toward the end of his life he described his contribution to the discipline as that of acting "as an importer" (in Reinhold 1973: 80)—a few hundred pages yielding tens of thousands, perhaps even more, as it is virtually impossible to catalogue the entire range of "Protestant ethic" scholarship. A dominant chord in sociology today would interpret Weber in the context of European sociology and social movements. We would argue otherwise. Although himself only a visitor in the body, with the help of Parsons and others Weber and the American "way of life" became one in spirit—the dao of capitalism. Critics from Weber's day until the present notwithstanding, Protestant Ethic scholarship continues only to grow, and despite Andrew Greeley's unheeded call for a "moratorium" over forty years ago, neither detractors nor proponents seem wearied. How has this come to be so?

Perhaps this is because there is no other account that offers a more *convincing* explanation of the origins of the modern life-world, even if the "truth" of Weber's account cannot be definitively established: Do we at some point want so badly to find a "cause" that can account for the fundamental changes in the social relationships and cultural developments we associate simultaneously with capitalism and modernity that we "will to believe" the Weber thesis? Is it that Weber offers us something more than a shoulder shrug, something essentially "spiritual" in a world of "mechanized petrification"—that is, a supremely ironic account of the way in which a religious ethic could be shaped by forces of "fate" to create "the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order," a "nullity" that "imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved"? (1930: 181–82) The dialectic

between technical-economic progress and personal meaninglessness is mediated by a religious dynamic that is alternatively *self*-perpetuating and *self*-destructive as material success becomes the ultimate test of self-abnegation in a secular restatement of “not my will, but thine be done.” The pursuit of work for its own sake at once replaces and becomes the pursuit of the divine for its own sake.

As it stands today, the *PESC* is a preeminently *American* sociological text—a book that was largely ignored in Germany except by a few critics—“American” in the sense that underlying it was a fascination by Weber with an alternative way of doing and seeing social life from that of fin-de-siècle Europe, an American way by which Weber was simultaneously enthralled and repelled, but which ultimately won the day in light of subsequent developments in Europe. Specifically, Weber gives a *religious* account of American capitalism that resonated with Americans’ own sense of themselves as a chosen nation. His final champion of the Protestant ethic is neither Luther nor Calvin nor Bunyan nor Milton nor Baxter but Benjamin Franklin’s Poor Richard.<sup>1</sup> With Parsons as his medium, Weber provided American sociology with a spiritual account of the origins of American capitalism and a prophetic warning against the dangers that accompany a loss of that higher moral vision. Sam Whimster may well be right in his recent assertion that the *PESC* essays are not in themselves sociology but instead represent at one level “descriptive psychology being applied to national-economy,” while they are at another level “a work of art” (2007: 11, 50), but their *effect* on American sociology—and not only sociology of religion, though especially sociology of religion—simply cannot be stressed strongly enough.

### *Retrospective*

“Finally a monograph has been written by Dr. Max Weber... which has astounded all readers with its wealth of thought and profundity of insight. This work more than anything else has given me the feeling that our expertise is at an end, that we have to start learning afresh”

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<sup>1</sup> We wish to emphasize that it is Poor Richard, not the historical person of Franklin himself, with whom Weber is concerned. Richard is a *religious* figure for Weber, symbolizing the coincident dynamics from ethic to spirit and back again. (Similarly with respect to Bunyan, it is Pilgrim to whom Weber refers.)

(Weber 1975: 128). These words of the German political economist G.F. Knapp were spoken not about *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, but a decade before the first publication of the essay, when Weber presented his East Elbian studies, now almost entirely ignored by the sociological community, yet so significant in their day that they, more than anything else, provided the basis for the invitation that Weber accepted to come to the United States and speak at the St. Louis exposition of 1904, shortly before the first segment of the *PESC* essay appeared in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaften und Sozialpolitik* later that fall. We introduce the East Elbian studies, peripheral as they may seem to the “momentous” Protestant Ethic debate, because we want to take the position that throughout his work Weber was interested in the interplay of economy and society and the interplay of value positions with material outcomes. The *PESC* was simply one piece among many in a life project.<sup>2</sup>

Weber’s first dissertation, now brilliantly translated by Lutz Kaelber, makes absolutely clear that he was excavating the socioeconomic structures of capitalist origins in his earliest academic forays (Weber 2003). Hence, by the time the *PESC* appeared, there can be no question that Weber was steeped in the history of the developments in accounting, labor relations, money and banking, political economics, and so on that had taken place as a part of the historical foreground of capitalist expansion. Yet these elements could not explain adequately, for Weber, what it was that, so to speak, caused modern rational capitalism to achieve “liftoff.” What was it that gave it “thrust”? What was it that served, as Randall Collins (1986: 93) has phrased it, as the “last intensification” of capitalism as a life-form of sociocultural relationships? Why was it, Weber puzzled, that capitalism became this cultural life-form in Anglo-America rather than “in the great centres of the Middle Ages like Florence where, God knows, capitalism was incomparably more ‘developed’” from a technical point of view? (2001: 112) This question became for him, more and more, “the demon who holds the fibers of his very life” (1946: 156).

A careful reading of the first dissertation should once and for all remove from the Weber debate the question of whether Weber understood

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<sup>2</sup> Gerth and Mills shared this same view of Weber’s work, in our opinion, when they chose to title Weber’s St. Louis address “Capitalism and Rural Society in Germany” (Weber 1946: 363).

the historical background of capitalism as an economic system. There is no question that he did; indeed, as a careful scholar of jurisprudence and economics he contributed to demonstrating an important step in its development and located it principally among the Italians. It is quite incredible that from his first critics forward Weber has been subject to criticism on the basis that the structural mechanisms of capitalism were first and most highly developed in Italy, a formally Catholic country—a fact that his first dissertation shows he knew very well. Indeed, virtually all of those mechanisms had to be in place *before* the liftoff moment of which Weber speaks, regardless of the European nation in which they occurred, and all of Europe was Catholic during that period. *And liftoff failed to occur!* The Weber thesis is an account of why what should have happened, “God knows,” in renaissance Italy did not occur. It seeks in a cultural, ideational context the missing ingredient, the catalyst rather than the cause, for capitalist explosion.

Weber referred to this catalyst as the “spirit” (*Geist*) of capitalism. The spirit of capitalism is neither capital itself nor Protestantism nor the Protestant ethic, but it has affinities with the Protestant ethic to the extent that we can say that the relatively “innerworldly” ethic of Protestantism set the stage for the emergence of the spirit of capitalism in time and space. The spirit of capitalism is a generalized world view that is unlikely ever to be found in the writings of either theologians or the religiously well-informed. Indeed, in one of those many ironies in which Weber so much reveled, it is likely that both Puritan theologians and the religiously well-informed would have specifically condemned the life-attitude that he labels the spirit of capitalism. The Protestant ethic is a heuristic device, a set of maxims, a vision of oughts. It both overarches and undergirds actual economic life, yet never exists as a discrete entity. It motivates a conduct of life. What matters to Weber is neither the theological doctrines nor the ethical theory of the Protestant groups that he enumerates but the way in which these functioned within the larger historical interplay of ideal and material interests to shift the course of history—ideas creating “world images” that work “like switchmen” on a railroad, who at a critical junction can change irrevocably the course of a train’s future destinations (Weber 1946: 280). What we wish to do in the rest of this chapter, then, is look at Weber within the context of his career as a student of capitalism and explore how the *PESC* developed into the benchmark text that it is today.

*The Early Years*

The dissertation proves, if nothing else, that before any public career Max Weber was more than casually interested in capitalist formation. His topic was not an easy one, and certainly there were others he could have taken up. In the East Elbian studies, whether intentionally or not, Weber encountered a “rentier” mentality in eastern Germany that he came to identify, in a sense, with “all that was wrong” with Germany, in contrast to the states of the greatest capitalist expansion. Throughout, Weber displays a divided attitude toward capitalism. He admires the “spirit” that launched it but laments the conditions that followed in its wake. This contrast is consistent with the style of Weber’s work more generally, wherein polar ideal types are set against each other. It may mirror or be mirrored by his own life, which seems similarly torn, but this is not to say that there is a necessary or causal relationship between his methodological style and his everyday life-world in either direction. What is more important to see at the outset is that while the *PESC* came after a “breakdown” period that was generally unproductive of immediate scholarly output for Weber, the *PESC* thesis was not unrelated to or at variance from his earlier output—either in the dissertation or the East Elbian work. He claims specifically that he lectured on *PESC*-related topics in 1897, hence, immediately before the breakdown; and the contacts he maintained throughout the breakdown period, both in terms of his reading and his personal visitors, would have kept him current in the field (1930: 198, n. 14; cf. Weber 1975). Indeed, the nature of Weber’s “breakdown” has often been overstated. He turned away from intellectual pursuits entirely for only a brief period, then returned to them, but not to public life. In any case, within the compass of the year in which the breakdown lifted, Weber turned out the core *PESC* text.

The essay was a specific contribution designed to mark the beginning of Weber’s collaboration with Edgar Jaffé and Werner Sombart in the editorial direction of the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaften und Sozialpolitik*, which Jaffé had acquired. Weber drafted the preface to the first issue of the new series and stated quite specifically the focus of its material: “the historical and theoretical recognition of *the general cultural significance of the capitalistic development.*” With that as the publication’s standard, Weber, having committed himself to the position that henceforth he “would *only* write for the journal,” produced the *PESC* (Weber 1975: 277–78).

But the *PESC* does not stand alone. It follows upon the publication of Weber's colleague Sombart's *Der Moderne Kapitalismus*, the first edition of which appeared in two volumes in 1902. This connection goes generally unrecognized today primarily because Sombart became a Nazi collaborator, whose 1911 work *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, though published before the rise of Nazism, became an important part of Nazi blame-placing for the deplorable economic conditions that developed in the Weimar Republic.

Because of the potentially anti-Semitic implications of Sombart's work, his study of the Jewish role in advancing capitalism is little read and discussed today, in contrast to his 1906 book that explores the factors leading to the lack of a socialist presence in the United States. Talcott Parsons, however, beginning in 1928 in his first major published essay, before the publication of his translation of the *PESC*, wrote of "‘Capitalism’ in Recent German Literature: Sombart and Weber." Parsons discreetly avoided the "Jewish question" and primarily focused on the two authors as theorists of capitalism in the most general sense. It is more likely because no one now reads Sombart and few read Parsons, apart from one or two texts, that the *PESC* became shrouded in far more mystery than it should have been. Quite simply, the *PESC* was a response to Sombart, but Weber's theoretical position was developed previously. Weber's coming to the *Archiv* at this particular time and in these specific associations, however, made its publication more urgent.<sup>3</sup> Hence, in a style that Weber displayed on more than one occasion toward those colleagues who were part of his own intellectual circle, the *PESC* was not directed against Sombart as critique in the negative sense; rather, it was part of an ongoing discussion among friends.

One has to have read Sombart to see what Weber was doing, which Parsons did prior to the period of Sombart's collaborationism, hence, with a relatively clear head on the theoretical issues the two friends confronted. When Weber had a disagreement with a colleague, he wrote an independent piece addressing their difference substantively, rather than a critical response—and it is in this sense that his very brief footnote mention of Sombart should be taken (1930: 198, n. 14). He is trying to say, in effect, "Look, I'm not just spinning something off of Sombart here. I've been working on this same problem for a long time myself." Rather than having dialogues with the ghosts of either

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<sup>3</sup> Kalberg (in Weber 2002: xxvii–viii) makes basically the same point.

Adam Smith or Karl Marx, as commentators have alleged,<sup>4</sup> Weber is in fact in much more lively conversation with Werner Sombart, who like Marx, sees historical development as a consequence of inexorable forces rather than contextually specific turns of events. What Sombart introduces to account for historical development up to his day is, as Parsons's notes (1928: 652), as much "another equally metaphysical entity" as Marx's theory—namely, "spirit." One need invoke no ghosts: *Weber was talking to the living Sombart.*<sup>5</sup> That's why *Geist* is put in quotation marks in Weber's title. It is "spirit" as Sombart uses it. In fact, Sombart credits the *PESC* directly as the stimulus for his own later theorizing about the role of the Jews in capitalism:

I hit upon the Jewish question completely by accident. . . . Weber's analyses in relation to the interconnection between Puritanism and capitalism forced me to pursue the influence of religion on economic life more than I had done so far, and here I encountered the Jewish problem first. . . . [A]ll those components of the Puritan dogma that appear to me to be of real significance for the elaboration of the capitalist spirit were borrowings from the sphere of ideas of the Jewish religion (Sombart 1911: v; cf. Sombart 2001: xxxiii).

Any of Weber's contemporaries conversant with the relevant literature would have seen this connection. Indeed, as is quite clear from the contemporary criticisms launched at Weber, it is not the "'spirit' of capitalism" they find hard to swallow, but the notion of "innerworldly asceticism," which is Weber's unique contribution to the debate, and it is this historical claim that Weber (2001) is at pains to justify in his replies to his critics.<sup>6</sup>

Innerworldly asceticism is crucial to the discussion, however, as more than a historical construct, because it is also intended by Weber as a historically specific case study of a form of social action to demonstrate an alternative theoretical position. Sombart, as Parsons notes (1928: 659–60), takes the view that "economic conditions are themselves the

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<sup>4</sup> See Salomon (1945: 596), for the "ghost of Marx"; Marshall (1982: 33), for that of Adam Smith.

<sup>5</sup> In the footnote Weber also points out, which is especially salient in regard to the dissertation and his other studies, that his "work on these issues" began well before the publication of Sombart's volumes, and goes back in its "most important points of view to much older work" of Weber's own (1930: 198, n. 14; cf. 2001: 62).

<sup>6</sup> Weber attacks his critics so vigorously precisely because they did not engage in the kind of friendly dialogue that he had with people like Sombart, Troeltsch, Simmel, and others.

creation of a spirit which, having once appeared, develops according to its own organic law, but is itself ultimate, having nothing further to explain it. His view results in fully as rigid a determinism as that of Marx.” Weber is turning Sombart on his head by saying completely the opposite: namely, the “spirit” of capitalism is the product of a historical event, the appearance of innerworldly asceticism among specific Protestant groups: “*One of the fundamental elements of the spirit of modern capitalism, and not only of that but of all modern culture: rational conduct on the basis of the idea of the calling, was born—that is what this discussion has sought to demonstrate—out of the spirit of Christian asceticism*” (Weber 1930: 180). The entire *PESC* story, right or wrong in its details, is part of a debate on historical inevitabilism, which Weber rejected as bad theory, regardless of whether it came from the political Left or Right. Weber rejected long-run inevitabilism for theory based on relatively short-term occasions of decisive change rooted in specific historic alterations in cultural systems. Sombart in this pre-Nazi period focused on the Jews preeminently to save his *theory*, since he could class the Jews as a *race*, hence, continue to sustain a position of historical inevitabilism, his “spirit.”<sup>7</sup>

Sombart was not the only friend of Weber to publish a book in 1902. Heinrich Rickert published his *Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Science* (*Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung*), and Weber judged it “*very good*” (Weber 1975: 260; cf. Oakes 1988). Weber had already been working to apply Rickert’s approach within the cultural realm, and the ideal type—discussed in Weber’s methodological essays of 1903–07 (the same period as the writing of the *PESC*)—became applied as a vehicle for illustrating an alternative approach to historical explanation freed of inevitabilist “forces.” Going back to the “switchman” analogy, the train doesn’t take one course or another because of the force with which it is moving, but because specific switchmen take concrete actions at crucial junctions. This does not mean, however, that the switchmen know the

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<sup>7</sup> Weber rejected racialist thought as an explanatory tool. If he were alive today, Weber would likely note the irony that Sombart, in both his Marxist and fascist incarnations, used race and not class as a major factor accounting for social change; meanwhile Weber, himself the consummate bourgeois (by his own description), was far more Marx-like in his view that class was of paramount importance, while race was not only a social construct but also epiphenomenal. Recent treatments of Parsons as a theorist of multiculturalism might well look to Weberian roots at this point (cf. Sciortino 2005; Kivisto 2004).

ultimate effects of their actions, hence, “the ironies of history” over which Weber would both revel and agonize. Sombart’s collaborationism was, of course, one of the saddest ironies to emerge from this specific historical debate, which at this stage, however, was largely academic and carried on between the two men and their colleagues as friends, where Sombart was by far the more widely known and comparably highly esteemed.

### *Critics and Interpreters*

The absence of bibliographic resources such as today’s *Social Science Citation Index* in the first half of the twentieth century makes it impossible to gauge how widely Weber’s essay was read and discussed, hence, what the total critical response could be taken to be. We do know from the *Archiv* itself of two early critics in Germany, and Weber’s response to them forms a crucial interpretive text, too frequently ignored. But it is similarly instructive to consider how limited the criticism was and how little apparent immediate response the essay generated. The first critic, H. Karl Fischer, was so obscure that he has only recently been definitively identified. Only through his attacks on Weber has even the second, Felix Rachfahl, attained any lasting significance, though his scholarly pedigree is more secure. Nevertheless, the curious thing about the Rachfahl comments is that they were directed against both Troeltsch and Weber (and more so Troeltsch than Weber), and the journal in which they were published, *Internationale Wochenschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technik*, invited Troeltsch, not Weber, to respond to them. According to Paul Honigsheim (2000: 232), Weber, though insulted, was not in fact going to reply, but Troeltsch insisted. Hence, Weber wrote his own response in the *Archiv*; and even when Rachfahl responded in turn to Weber’s reply, he went to the *Internationale Wochenschrift*, while Weber again was forced to the *Archiv* for rebuttal.

Seemingly, this is the extent of the “critical reception” of the *PESC* in Weber’s day. We know from scattered remarks in Marianne Weber’s biography that *PESC* topics continued among those of his circle for some time, but with little else to go on, one might think the essay was falling into relative obscurity. But perhaps there was more going on than meets the eye, as Fischer as early as 1908 speaks of a “lamentable chain of misunderstanding” regarding the essay, though it is not clear whether Fischer is referring to internal aspects of Weber’s argument

or diverse opinions among his readers (Weber 2001: 1; cf. Martindale 1975: ch. 1).

In the United States, Weber achieved his first notice for his East Elbian studies as a contribution to “rural sociology,” and his St. Louis address gives little indication that Weber was standing on the threshold of issuing what would become “arguably the most famous and widely read [text] in the classical canon of sociological writing” (Chalcraft and Harrington in Weber 2001: 1). Weber’s first book to be translated into English was, likewise, not the *PESC* but the posthumous *General Economic History* (German publication, 1923; translation 1927). The translation of the *GEH* suggests that there was enough interest in Weber to take up his work, but as with the rural community lecture, the interest came out of the discipline of economics, not sociology.<sup>8</sup> Weber, in fact, did not at all “play into” early American sociology. This is somewhat peculiar, inasmuch as Albion Small, who was often the arbiter of what did and did not “make it” as sociology in the first decade of the twentieth century by his editorship of the *American Journal of Sociology*, was in contact with Simmel as a member of the journal’s editorial board, and Simmel was a friend of Weber, whom Weber had assisted in attempting to find a permanent position in Germany.

Nevertheless, it was not until 1924 (two years before Small’s death) that an article entitled “Studies in the Sociology of Religion: I. The Sociology of Protestantism,” by Heinrich H. Maurer, appeared in the *American Journal of Sociology*. Although Maurer quickly faded from the scene and without any lasting significance to American sociology, the article is of considerable importance today because it presents a fully pre-Parsonian assessment of the *PESC*—as far as we know the *only* pre-Parsonian assessment of the essay in American sociology.<sup>9</sup> It also comes prior to the 1926 publication of R.H. Tawney’s *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, which may have facilitated publication of Parsons’s translation, but also set up a specific critical mentality for its recep-

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<sup>8</sup> During his lifetime, as its preface notes, Weber termed the *GEH* “an improvisation with a thousand defects,” and would not see it through to publication (cf. Weber 1923: v).

<sup>9</sup> P.T. Forsyth’s 1910 “Calvinism and Capitalism,” in the British journal *Contemporary Review*, is the earliest known English-language summary and assessment of the Weber thesis. It is favorable. It is also unique in being based entirely on the 1904–05 essay, rather than on the later restatement in 1919–20. Although Parsons may well have read Forsyth’s essay either during his time at the LSE or before, he does not mention it in his early article on Sombart and Weber or in his later “brief account” of his own intellectual development (cf. Hallen et al. 1975). It also does not figure significantly in subsequent American literature. Forsyth died in 1921.

tion. Thus, the Maurer piece is as close as we can get to an American sociological assessment of the *PESC* that is prior to both critique of the thesis and any putative attempts by Parsons to “bias” Weber toward Parsons’s own grand theoretical scheme.

Maurer’s article is primarily a straightforward summary of Weber’s argument. Other than the simple fact of its historical uniqueness, Maurer’s essay is most important to discussions of the *PESC* generally for his emphasis on the need to differentiate clearly between Calvinism and Lutheranism in Weber’s work; that is, Maurer wants American readers to understand that Weber’s “Protestantism” has a more limited, carefully defined scope than the popular use of “Protestant” in the United States in the early twentieth century. Maurer’s essay on Weber is part of a series of articles Maurer published in the *AJS* that were intended to become a book, wherein he would account for the uniquely American character of Missouri Synod Lutheranism. Maurer wanted to show how it was that the American way of doing religion could mutate a church-like religion into a sectarian form. Again, historic specificity is served by Maurer’s much neglected contribution.

It would not be until the late 1980s that Harry Liebersohn would raise the importance of recognizing that Weber’s *PESC* in its original form was contrasting preeminently English Calvinism to what Weber saw as an incompletely reformed, hence essentially Catholic, otherworldly ascetic, German Lutheranism. Kemper Fullerton makes this same point by title in the only other major American summary article, “Calvinism and Capitalism,” in the *Harvard Theological Review*. Perhaps anticipating Parsons, but also with Tawney’s view now in print, Fullerton writes in his opening footnote the additional simple declaratory sentence: “Weber’s essay deserves translation into English” (1928: 163). At the same time, Fullerton’s parsimonious title may have inadvertently spawned a whole school of Weberian misinterpretation by creating a too-simple association that later became a causal equation—that Calvinism *caused* capitalism, something that Weber never said. A Protestant *ethic* and a *spirit* of capitalism, as “useful fictions” are quite different from both Protestantism and capitalism. In any case, neither Maurer nor Fullerton offered a critique of Weber’s position, though Maurer did caution against a misreading of Weber—suggesting thereby that there may already have been such misreadings in at least some academic and religious circles.

By 1926 Tawney was, of course, aware of Weber’s work and realized that it presented a thesis at variance from his own in *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*, published in 1912. The first thing that can

be surmised from this publication history, therefore, is that Tawney was either unaware of the *PESC* when the 1912 volume was sent to press or did not consider it of major significance. We can also assume that at least in some measure “the Weber thesis” was “in the air” sufficiently by the mid-1920s for Tawney to find a receptive publisher and audience for *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*—and for Tawney to think the idea worth countering, even if simply for his own protection. Regardless of the attention to Weber’s work that failed to appear in the United States at this point, there was a critical reception in England. Sociology was far slower to develop in Britain than in the United States (perhaps because too many people had read only Spencer); hence, the thesis remained in the hands of economic historians and historians of religion. Tawney’s work and a spate of other essays nevertheless provided the perfect *entré* for Parsons’s translation, which appeared in both Britain and the United States in 1930, with a foreword by Tawney.

Immediately upon the heels of the translation, H.M. Robertson published another book-length critique in 1933, to which Parsons immediately responded with an attack based on the assertion that Robertson did not understand Weber’s work at all (Parsons 1935; cf. Broderick 1934). Robertson thus handed Parsons the perfect opportunity for a hermeneutic on the *PESC* that would remain a constant in his work.

At the same time, however, it might well be argued that without the publication of *The Structure of Social Action* in 1937, the Weber work could have been but a relatively narrow historical slice of socioeconomic theory. Extending from the relatively limited focus of the *PESC*, Parsons selected bits and pieces of Weber’s approach, to combine with that of others, and create a grand theoretical scheme that came to dominate American sociology—and related disciplines as they developed, such as organizational theory and behavior—for over a quarter of a century. Parsons most succinctly explained both the differences between Tawney and Weber, on the one hand, and his own position on Weber and modern society on the other, in a 1962 memorial note for Tawney in the *American Sociological Review*. He points out that whereas Tawney saw Protestantism as “overwhelmingly permissive” in regard to capitalism as a “weakening of resistances to its alleged amorality . . . , Weber’s position was quite different”:

[I]n Weber’s view, ascetic Protestantism imposed a new rigorism, especially with reference to the obligation to active work, to contribute to productivity . . . [T]he development from Calvin to the later Puritans was by no means only, or even mainly, one of adaptation to changing external

circumstances. It involved an “unfolding” of the latent implications of the religious position itself. Weber’s general position here is very close to Durkheim’s conception of the institutionalized individualism, of “organic solidarity,” whereas basically, Tawney is closer to the position of Spencer, which Durkheim criticized... [T]he issue between Tawney and Weber is still the most important line of division in the historical-sociological interpretation of the modern industrial order (1962: 889–90).

The publication of Parsons’s translation of the *PESC* thus opened the way for a particularly American appreciation of Max Weber, which was all the more enhanced by the addition of the “Protestant Sects in North America” essay and related materials in the Gerth and Mills volume, *From Max Weber*, published in 1946.

### *The American Weber*

Although perhaps less so today than during the later years of his life, it remains a relatively popular academic pastime to be critical of Parsons for both his sociology and for his translational oddities. While these criticisms may well be justified on specific points, they largely obscure the extent to which it can be said that Talcott Parsons gave American sociology Max Weber and most specifically the *PESC*. It is relatively fruitless to speculate on what American sociology would have been like without Parsons because of the breadth and depth of his influence across almost a half century, an influence that was in no small part the result of a particular reading of Émile Durkheim and Max Weber: Durkheim for his assertion of religion as a *sui generis* phenomenon, but much more so Weber for his *demonstration* of it in the *PESC*. At the core of this was Parsons’s interest in *values*.

The “encounter” between Parsons and Weber has never been fully understood and perhaps never will be. Nevertheless recent research can allow us to move closer to a reconstruction. Parsons entered Amherst College in the fall of 1920 intending a major in biology. He writes that in his junior year, however, he was “converted to social science under the influence of the unorthodox ‘insitutional economist’ Walter Hale Hamilton” (in Hallen et al. 1975: 449; cf. Parsons 1970: 826–27). In the same year he also took a course in philosophy with Clarence Ayres. The spring term before Parsons arrived as a freshman, Tawney had made his first trip to the United States—to lecture at Amherst, at the behest of Alexander Meiklejohn, its progressive president. This opened a contact between Amherst and the LSE (Terrill 1973: 56–57). Virtually

no sooner than Parsons had converted to the social sciences, however, the Amherst trustees sacked Meiklejohn, and in protest a significant number of faculty resigned. Hamilton and Ayres were among them. Notwithstanding, Parsons graduated among the top students in his class and was enabled by his family to spend a year at LSE as a special student where, however, he was actually more interested in Malinowski than Tawney—or so it seemed. At the end of the year, Parsons had intended to return to Amherst for at least a one-year position and was in correspondence to that end with his German professor, Otto Manthey-Zorn, who had remained on the faculty after the Meiklejohn dismissal. It was Manthey-Zorn who became aware of the fellowship at Heidelberg and steered Parsons to it, while holding the one-year position at Amherst open for him until 1926–27 (Wearne 1989: 38).

Parsons has written that he “had never heard Weber’s name mentioned” during his year at LSE or at Amherst. Weber’s name was, however, “still dominant at Heidelberg.” Parsons would write specifically that the “turning point” in his theoretical life toward “the voluntaristic theory of action was going to Germany, and falling under the aegis of Weber” (in Hallen et al. 1975: 4–5). His dissertation, principally on Sombart and Weber, but with references to Marxist thought, appears in its published version as the *Journal of Political Economy* articles (1928–29).<sup>10</sup> His doctoral committee consisted of three people: Edgar Salin, Karl Jaspers, and Alfred Weber, Max Weber’s brother. Other professors included Heinrich Rickert and Emil Lederer (Wearne 1989: 44). Jaspers, under whom Parsons also took a course, practically adored Weber, who was one of Jaspers’s “most influential mentors” (Kirkbright 2004: 76) and whom Jaspers would later term “the greatest German of our age,” classing him with Descartes and Leonardo da Vinci (1964). The Jaspers were also friends of the Webers and remained in touch with Marianne Weber after Max’s death. It is hard to conceive how a young scholar, by in his own words “coverted” to the social sciences, whose Amherst advocate was his German professor—himself among the initial three to be awarded a prestigious Folger Professorship at Amherst (see Fuess 1935)—could have done otherwise than “encounter” Max Weber as

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<sup>10</sup> These articles were in fact the dissertation. There is no German original. Parsons also states explicitly that it was Weber’s “general ideas on the nature of modern capitalism” that were “the principal focus” of the dissertation (1970: 828).

he did in that moment at Heidelberg. The conversion begun under Hamilton was fulfilled under Jaspers.

To what extent did Parsons “invent” Max Weber? The answer is that we will probably never know. In the 1970s, it became academically attractive to try to create a “new” Weber, hence neo-Weberianism, and in the work of a group of Indiana University sociologists, to “de-Parsonize” Weber (Cohen, Hazelrigg, and Pope 1975). Certainly every person coming to another person’s work brings his or her own experiences, hence biases or “readings.” The hands of a translator are extremely powerful, and anyone who has dealt with texts in translation can see how dramatically different senses can be made by alternative choices of words—and the more so as words “age.” It is also unclear how many American scholars were sufficiently literate in German in Weber’s own day to read him accurately, and this is complicated by the fact that Weber writes in difficult prose, even for native-speaking Germans. We also are now aware that there are differences between the 1904–05 essay and Weber’s 1920 revision shortly before his death, upon which Parsons relies. Hence, we shall never know precisely what Weber meant by every word he wrote or his every turn of phrase, and it is certainly true that at some points Weber is playing with phrases or ideas from works we cannot now distinguish.

Nevertheless, we can get qualitative measures of the extent to which Parsons’s contemporaries judged his work worthwhile and his assessment of Weber accurate in their own eyes. We can also assess the other major translational project, H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills’s *From Max Weber*. The Gerth and Mills collection has special significance to this assessment inasmuch as Mills has been identified by Don Martindale in his *Prominent Sociologists Since World War II* as, along with Parsons but as a counterpoint to him, one of the two “Titans” of American sociology in the second half of the twentieth century. Both of them Martindale sets as specifically heirs of Max Weber, and Weber as the luminary of American sociology in this period.

What we intend to do in the remainder of this chapter is survey the American reception of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, *The Structure of Social Action*, and *From Max Weber* as reflected in contemporary reviews at the time of their publication. This is hardly a rigorous assessment of either their later impact or their absolute value; nevertheless, it can help us to see how an intellectual *milieu* develops. The translation of the *PESC* has a specific historical context: it was published and reviewed prior to the time that either Hitler or Stalin

had unambiguously manifested themselves as agents of mass evil. *The Structure of Social Action* was published and reviewed closer to the start of World War II, but well before the entry of the United States into the conflict. *From Max Weber* was published and reviewed immediately on the heels of the cessation of World War II, before the Iron Curtain was clearly manifest on the part of the Soviet Union and McCarthyism rose in the United States. In short, all three of these works appeared at least twenty years prior to the “student revolts” of the late 1960s and their outcomes. How the events of the Cold War era shaped readings of these works after their initial reception is a separate question.

*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Working on the basis that reviews in the 1930s and 1940s were all completed within two years of publication, the most startling observation to be made about the translation of the *PESC* is that it was *not* reviewed in the *American Journal of Sociology*, the *American Economic Review*, the *American Political Science Review*, the *Journal of Political Economy*, *Sociology and Social Research*, or *Social Forces*, among major social science journals then in publication. This does not mean that it was not reviewed at all in America, as we shall see, but it does suggest that this particular “social scientific” press did not see it within its scope. We will also see that by the time of *From Max Weber*, fifteen years later, “the earth had changed.”<sup>11</sup>

In terms of the discipline of sociology itself, especially given the absence of reviews in the aforementioned journals, the most important review is one by Howard Becker in the *Annals*, as part of a three-book review, two of which were German language first publications. Becker had studied in Germany (after Weber’s death, as Parsons had) and was at the University of Pennsylvania at this time, about to distinguish himself by the publication of his *Systematic Sociology* in 1935, based on the work of Leopold von Wiese; and as is clear from the assignment of the other two texts for his review, he had attained recognition for

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<sup>11</sup> Words originally written by Weber’s wife on the occasion of his death (Weber 1975: 698). Of the same event Jaspers wrote: “I feel as though I am paralysed, but at the same time I am enthusiastic in my love—in a quite impersonal sense—for this mind. . . . Max Weber’s existence as a guarantee that ‘greatness’ is still attainable today. . . . The world seems like a changed place for me” (Kirkbright 2004: 86).

being capable of working in German scholarship.<sup>12</sup> Becker went from Penn to the sociology department of the University of Wisconsin, where he eventually became C. Wright Mills's major professor. So, here we have how Mills's mentor assessed both the *PESC* and Parsons's translational efforts:

Max Weber's masterly analysis of the Protestant ethic and the part it has played (and perhaps still plays) in the development of modern capitalism has long been known to students of economic history who can read the difficult German in which the author's thought is clothed. Other students have perforce been content to repeat the encomiums or strictures made by their more fortunate brethren. Now . . . all those formerly debarred may decide for themselves upon the merits of the historical and methodological controversy that began in 1904–1905 when the study first appeared and that has been raging ever since.

Talcott Parsons, the translator, deserves high praise for his excellent rendering; the same painstaking care has been lavished on the humblest footnote as on the text itself, and every page bears witness to such skillful avoidance of stylistic ambiguities or infelicities that a fine feeling for linguistic values must be credited to him in addition to his obvious familiarity with religious and economic history (1931: 197).

Assessing Becker's assessment of Parsons's translation can lead to an infinite regression. What is important to our purposes is that the only specifically social scientific assessment of Parsons's translation published at the time of its appearance was by a major figure in the field, professionally recognized for his skill in German, and that assessment was overwhelmingly positive. The "iron cage" did not restrain Becker's enthusiasm. This was the man who schooled Mills in Weber, and Mills had already been schooled by the same Clarence Ayres who had been a professor of Parsons (Martindale 1975: 61–64).<sup>13</sup>

Becker did not merely settle for a general review of the thesis and endorsement of Parsons's translation; he also turned to J.B. Kraus's critique of the thesis (1930), another of the works under review. What Becker writes is not only important to an assessment of where the *PESC* thesis stood by the 1930s, but also demonstrates his own clear

<sup>12</sup> Becker particularly focused on explicating the ideal-type and historical sociology.

<sup>13</sup> Too much, however, can be made of association between Parsons, Mills, and Ayres, who was a very peripatetic teacher. Ayres does not cite Parsons or Weber in either his *Theory of Economic Progress* (1944) or his *Divine Right of Capital* (1946), both of which were published after Weber and Parsons had become well known. He does cite Tanney once, in the latter volume, but not in reference to *Religion and the Rise of Capital*.

grasp of the methodological context within which Weber wrote, hence should be understood: “The vitality of Weber’s thesis,” Becker asserts, “is perpetually demonstrated by the large number of studies that focus upon it each year; someone is always ‘refuting’ or ‘reinforcing’ it. Unfortunately, those who discuss Weber do not always completely understand him.” Kraus, Becker believes, does “understand Weber fairly well, even when he takes direct issue with him”; yet, nevertheless, “Weber’s position is not seriously threatened by this work of Kraus.” Why is this the case? Becker’s answer shows a clear grasp of Weber’s method and intent, one that three-quarters of a century since its translation and Becker’s review still eludes many putative “critics” of the *PESC* thesis. He writes:

The reason why it is not seriously threatened lies in Weber’s use of the ideal-typical method. He never claimed empirical accuracy for his ideal-typical studies, but merely asserted that understanding of the empirical chaos could result only from its subjection to heuristic constructs that at bottom are nothing more than working fictions pragmatically validated (Becker 1931: 197–98).

Becker refers for confirmation of this point not only to the third book he is specifically reviewing, Werner Bienfait’s *Max Webers Lehre vom geschichtlichen Erkennen*, but also Herman J. Grab’s *Der Begriff des Rationalen in der Soziologie Max Webers*, Bernhard Pfister’s *Die Entwicklung zum Idealtypus*, and Hans Vaihinger’s *The Philosophy of “As If.”*

Becker’s review is the only strictly social-scientific review to accompany the publication of Parsons’s translation. Other reviews are worth inspection, however, not only for how they evaluate the work, which is overwhelmingly favorable, but for a sense of the appreciation of the *PESC* thesis in their time. For example, in the *International Journal of Ethics*, C.D. Burns (1930) writes that Weber “sees and shows very clearly how religious influences have had an effect on economic or industrial practices.” Noting that Weber draws extensively from the writings of clergy to undergird his thesis, Burns writes that instead Weber

might have found reinforcement for his argument in the biographies of successful business men. The simplicity of mind with which they preach the excellence of their own narrowness is very pathetic. Holidays and divine sleep become only intervals in the “serious” work of life, selling bad goods to fools; for what matters is what is called “work.” To scorn delights was regarded as desirable even by a poet; so strong was Puritanism. . . . No student of morality can afford to neglect the argument; and particularly in the United States, where “the faith” still operates in offices and workshops, it may be useful to consider where that faith came from.

In a review in *The Nation and Athenaeum*, R.M. Fox praises Weber's thesis as "well knit and distinctively expressed." Although he worries that Weber has an inclination to "over-emphasize the independent contribution of religion, perhaps as a reaction to those economic theorists who gave no place to human will or ideas," Fox's overall assessment is that "the book is a remarkable study of the remoulding of religion to fit men's needs—the more so as with all its knowledge it avoids a dogmatic interpretation of world progress" (1930). While both these reviewers curiously overlook the place Weber gives to Franklin, at least Burns provides independent sources of evidence from "the business community" that would support the thesis in a way that is consistent with Weber's use of Franklin.

Two reviews from the "respectable Left" are particularly interesting, inasmuch as their relative sympathy for the Weber thesis belies indictments from thirty-five or forty years later that would place Parsons's translation into a different ideological context. Benjamin Ginzburg (1930), writing in *The New Republic*, picks up where Fox leaves off. He writes that

we are so accustomed to the economic explanation of social institutions that it strikes us with amazement to be told that economic facts and economic motives are themselves not primary, but also require an explanation. It is just such amazement that the late Max Weber created in the camp of economists when he published this essay twenty-five years ago, and it is just such amazement that the book will again create in the minds of the larger public to which this translation will make Weber's thought available.

The origin of modern capitalism is usually explained in economic terms.... It is taken as a fact that the capitalist mentality was already there and that the...human factor may be left out of account in any explanation of economic development.

It is just this human factor that requires an explanation in the case of capitalism. The spirit of capitalistic enterprise was not always regarded as respectable. How did it become so?...

Weber's contention is not merely that the activity of money-making, frowned upon during the Middle Ages, received social approval as a result of the Protestant Reformation: it is that the type of money-making enterprise characteristic of capitalism received its constitutive spirit from the religious outlook of Protestantism....

What really emerges from a reading of Weber's essay is the feeling that economic facts and institutions are cultural phenomena, more or less responsive to the ethical aspirations of men.... [I]t is comforting to realize that the capitalistic outlook has not always existed. What comes into being in time eventually goes out in time.

What Ginzburg grasps with particularly wry humor at the close of his review is the noninevitabilism inherent in the Weber thesis. Just as capitalism is not the inevitable outcome of anything, so the outcome of capitalism is not to be predicted as “inevitable” either. His position is far from the doctrinaire Marxism of the 1930s, without at the same time fawning over the capitalist project. Weber becomes part of a reading toward the transcendence of the status quo rather than in support of it.

The final review comes from the politically protean Sidney Hook (1930), who was at this point in his life one of the doyens of intellectual Marxism. Both the care and tone of his review clearly indicate that at the time of the publication of Parsons’s translation neither the substance of Weber’s argument nor the details of Parsons’s presentation were seen as threatening to left-wing thought or goals. After noting that “in one of the flashes of insight which stud the footnotes of ‘Capital,’ Karl Marx called attention to the part played by Protestantism in the genesis of capital,” Hook writes:

In a remarkably erudite and suggestive essay, which raised a flurry in intellectual circles on the Continent when it first appeared, Weber maintains the thesis that a religious ethic which regarded “restless, continuous, systematic work in a worldly *calling* as the highest means to asceticism,” functioned in a concrete way “as the most powerful lever conceivable for the expansion of the spirit of capitalism.” And since Weber believes that the spirit of capitalism flourished before a genuine capitalistic economy arose, he concludes that Protestantism did not merely play a part but rather a *preponderant* part in the genesis of capitalism. This conclusion, he asserts, is incompatible with the theory of historical materialism in its naive form. The essay posits, therefore, in a crucial way the central problem of every philosophy of culture—namely, the nature and role of ideas in history.

What originally suggested . . . that the passionate piety of the Reformation had strong worldly roots in a sphere at first sight so utterly removed from it? There was obviously the historic fact that capitalism with its rational economic technique had developed primarily in Protestant countries. But even more important was the contemporary empirical observation [on which Hook alone would remark] that, other things being roughly equal, workers brought up in an intensely pietistic or evangelical atmosphere took their jobs more seriously, labored more diligently, and lived more frugally than those from more conventional environments. The correlation seemed to point to some causal connection between the specific activities of man’s life in this world and his conception of an after-life in the next, but how can we tell which was cause and which effect? . . .

It is only where the pursuit of profit is the pursuit of a “forever *renewed* profit by means of a continuous rational enterprise” that we can significantly speak of capitalism. By the “spirit” of modern capitalism Weber means a social ethic congenial to the rise and intensification of this kind of rational economy, and capable of breaking down the conventional restraints to the accumulation of wealth and exploitation of labor which derived from feudal Catholicism. An ideal illustration of the spirit of capitalism is furnished by the writings [n.b., not the person] of Franklin. Here we have a social morality which centers exclusively around the business of getting ahead in the world. Time and credit are money. . . . The idea that honesty is a matter of *policy*, an essentially immoral notion, becomes a copy book maxim. . . . Labor becomes an end in itself and the surest way to blessedness. A man’s work is his *calling*. Historically, maintains Weber, the emergence of such an ethic was a condition precedent to increasing the productivity and intensity of labor without which accumulation of capital could not take place. But now how did this ethic arise? From the religious dogmas of the Protestant sects, is Weber’s answer. . . .

But to accept this is not incompatible with the belief that both Protestantism and the spirit of capitalism arose only there where the objective possibilities of a rational capitalistic economy were already given. Otherwise how can the following questions be adequately answered? Why did Protestantism arise *when* it did? Why did it spread *where* it did? Why did its doctrines develop *as* they did?

The more general cultural question upon which this study bears is whether ideas make history or history ideas. Phrased this way, however, the question is falsely put, for there is no real dichotomy involved. History is the result of human action in behalf of ideas upon a material world which conditions both their relevance and their efficacy. No ideas ever existed outside a stream of social life and no social life ever existed that has not been partly molded by ideas. . . . A critical historical materialism poses specific problems: such as, Under what conditions are certain ideas evolved? What ideas have played a part in bringing about certain conditions? It does not, as some vulgar Marxists in this country imagine, attempt to reduce the whole of social life to simple economic equations of the first degree. . . . It believes that, broadly speaking, the way men make their living and the social relations which are built on it furnish both cue and key to the organic pattern of a given culture. And this it advances as a hypothesis, not as a dogma, as an aid not only in understanding a culture but in changing it.

Clearly Hook has no intention of abandoning “historical materialism”—though we can note his distinction of that position from that of “vulgar Marxists.” Paralleling an important strain of western Marxism associated with Lukács and the Frankfurt School that would shape the neo-Marxist thought of the New Left, what Hook wants to do with Weber is incorporate his work into the materialist tradition rather than

expunge it or demolish it. Hook takes no significant exception to any of Weber's data or the specific conclusions he draws from them. Rather, Hook wants to put the data into a larger interpretive context, one that Weber might not have accepted in its entirety but that in outline was not terribly different from that to which Weber pointed in his more general work. On the critical issue of historic specificity rather than inevitabilism, the two are united. Both are also united in their ultimate goal of concrete application rather than abstract dogma.

As we look at this whole set of reviews, several generalizations appear: First, none is critical of Parsons's translation, though we do not know how competent any of them were in German. Becker, however, certainly had a reputation of competence, and he praises the translation. Second, though some express reservations about the Weber thesis, there is general appreciation of it, and in particular, leftist authors attempt to appropriate it into a broader theoretical whole rather than rebut or denounce it. Third, unstated but clearly observable, is that Weber's 1920 "Author's Introduction" to the whole of his sociology of religion case studies, which Parsons inserts before the *PESC* essay, causing some controversy among Weber scholars over the past quarter century, is virtually ignored by the commentators—including Ginzburg and Hook, who would have found in it a Weber even more congenial to their perspectives and more explicit in his avowal of the limited nature of his thesis about the "causal" role of religion. Hence, while it may be that Parsons's use of the "Author's Introduction" at the beginning of the English edition of the *PESC* could mislead a reader in interpreting the *PESC*, it apparently did not do so to any of these reviewers in 1930.

### *The Structure of Social Action*

Given the putative overdetermining effect that the de-Parsonizers would have us think Talcott Parsons had on American sociology, his *Structure of Social Action* played to relatively meager reviews—meager and mixed, though not necessarily bad. Unlike their treatment of the *PESC*, however, the "big three" sociology journals in the United States all took account of the work. Floyd House (1939), writing in a very brief review in the *American Journal of Sociology*, said that this "meaty book is important...because it contains the best summary and interpretation of the sociological theory of Pareto, Durkheim, and Max Weber that is now available in English." But House lamented that "it is unfortunate that it is so long and so abstruse in style..." a criticism that would

hound Parsons throughout his life. Warner Gettys (1939) in *Social Forces* paid special tribute to Parsons's treatment of Weber, stating that *Structure* contained "the wisest interpretation and soundest criticism of Weber's more significant writings to be found in English." That Parsons "has succeeded so well is a matter for congratulation."

George Simpson (1938), on the other hand, writing in *The New Republic*, was less enthusiastic. Speaking of Alfred Marshall, Vilfredo Pareto, Emile Durkheim, and Weber—the four thinkers whom Parsons sought to assess in developing his "voluntaristic theory of action" in *Structure*—Simpson wrote that "the presentation of these four theorists is so indirect as to attract only a narrow audience of initiated narrow specialists. This is particularly deplorable in the case of Max Weber, whose thought needs the delineation in English which Mr. Parsons could so well give it if he would." The latter phrase is particularly telling, however, because it suggests that Simpson, who would later bring out a selected translations collection from Durkheim, thought Parsons knew Weber's works well and could assess them competently. Simpson doesn't end his critique there, however, but sets up another criticism with backhanded compliment:

Mr. Parsons's extraction of a theory of social action from the monumental works of these four thinkers leads to a conclusion in which four mountains give birth to one mouse—a conclusion (the voluntaristic theory of action) which offers no foothold for scientific social research and which does grave injustice to Mr. Parsons' own command of the literature.

Given that Simpson's review was one paragraph of a three-paragraph review of two books, the way he handles Parsons—the esteem for his abilities and the virtual demolition not only of *Structure* but also of Parsons's pet theoretical construct—may hide far more than we can unearth today. At the same time, it is an endorsement of both Parsons's knowledge of Weber in particular and the European theoretical literature in general, and there is no condemnation of Parsons's translational skills either in this volume or in the *PESC*.

The discipline of sociology is frequently far more incestuous than it likes to admit, especially in its leadership. At the time *Structure* was given such brief review in the *American Journal of Sociology* by House, Louis Wirth was one of two coeditors under Burgess. Howard Becker was one of two book review coeditors of the *American Sociological Review*, where Louis Wirth (1939) wrote what may be the longest review *Structure* received. Wirth's review is directed almost entirely to Parsons's own

theoretical arguments and synthesis through the volume, rather than toward his treatment of the four major theorists. Criticism and praise are equally mixed. Wirth's conclusion, however, is particularly interesting for a remark upon which he does not elaborate, in an otherwise upbeat finale: "Although one should not expect to find in this volume a rounded treatment of the theoretical and empirical works of the four writers, especially of Max Weber, it constitutes the most intensive and intelligent consideration these works have received thus far." Why *especially* Weber? Was it something in the complexity of Weber's work or in the peculiarities of Parsons's synthetic system? Would that Wirth had told us what he thought was missing *especially* from Parsons's treatment of Weber that would have made it more "rounded."

Inasmuch as it is not the purpose of this chapter to evaluate Parsons's own sociological scheme, our survey of reviews of *The Structure of Social Action* can conclude here. What is most important is what we do *not* find in these reviews—we do not find anyone taking serious exception to Parsons's assessment of Weber. Wirth comes the closest, but he fails to give any answers pertinent to the questions he implicitly raises. Simpson, who is the most critical among the reviewers, chides Parsons for not giving "the delineation" that he could "well give" and for not adequately displaying his "command of the literature." The reviewers of Parsons's day by and large saw Parsons as a capable Weber scholar, debating neither his explication nor interpretation of Weber. Rex Crawford (1938), writing in the *Annals*, for example, thinks Parsons's delimitation of the field of sociology to voluntaristic action and the integration of values "unnecessarily narrow," but admits that Weber's treatment "of the spirit of capitalism" does "point in this direction." Of course, it may well be asked how many of these reviewers had actually read Weber in the German and how much Weber they read. Only Wirth by nativity could have been expected to have done so. This makes his review "especially" provocative, possibly opening a wedge for de-Parsonizers, but not a formal justification for doing so.

#### *From Max Weber*

While the *PESC* had almost no reception in the specialized journals of the social sciences and *Structure* had minimal impact on general journals written for an intellectual (or would-be intellectual) readership, *From Max Weber* got a hearing in both courts. Interpreters of the volume, however, do not see inconsistencies between the later translations and the *PESC*. A graduate of Parsons's program at Harvard, Harry M.

Johnson (1946), for example, writing in *The Nation*, opens by claiming that “Weber is a much-needed corrective to those ‘realistic’ thinkers who attribute all social weal and woe to ill-analyzed ‘economic factors’ and tend to regard all ideas (but their own, of course) as merely ‘reflections’ and justifications of class interests.” He points out that religious systems “give ‘meaning’ to the world” and, as they do so, “will inevitably have a bearing on the economic and political spheres also” and that this was the core thesis of the *PESC*. He continues: “The controversy over that essay arose partly because many critics were not familiar with the rest of Weber’s work. Gerth and Mills now provide us with some more of Weber’s confirmation”—i.e., additional pieces that Johnson sees as substantiating the *PESC* thesis—and he corrects Gerth and Mills’s translation of *Wirtschaftsethik*, from their “social psychology” to “economic ethic,” to show that the piece that they render as “The Social Psychology of the World Religions” is actually part of the same impetus as the *PESC*: “the process of ‘rationalization’—the growth of ‘systematic coherence’ in all phases of thought and social organization.... Readers of ‘The Protestant Ethic’ will remember that Weber lays great emphasis on the Calvinists’ rejection of the sacraments and all other ‘superstition’—that is, on ‘the disenchantment of the world’ in favor of rational techniques of mastery.”

Johnson, who remained active in sociology into the 1970s as a member of the University of Illinois faculty, concludes his review by tying the essays of *From Max Weber* to Parsons, as both translator of the *PESC* and author of *The Structure of Social Action*:

The difficulty of Weber’s German has prevented him from having as wide an influence in this country as he should. A few specialists, notably Talcott Parsons, have assimilated his conceptual scheme and even improved upon it; but his brilliant empirical studies, such as the ones collected here by Gerth and Mills, will be read for a long time to come. For minds of a scientific bent, it is hardly too much to say that Weber compensates for the disenchantment of the world.

This paragraph makes clear that Johnson not only failed to find Parsons’s translational efforts in need of “correction” but actually saw him “improving” on Weber.<sup>14</sup> While perhaps not quite as taken as Johnson

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<sup>14</sup> Doyle Paul Johnson, author of Chapter Two in this volume, completed his doctorate at the University of Illinois during Harry M. Johnson’s tenure there. (The two are unrelated.) As the former is today the author of an undergraduate text in social theory, one might see a kind of “apostolic succession” continuing through time.

with the “compensator” effect of Weber’s work—though the use of that term in sociology of religion today raises an ironic possibility for interpreting “devotion” to Weber—the author of a brief, unsigned review in the *American Sociological Review* (1947: 616) also strongly endorsed the volume as “required reading for students of stratification, institutions, sociology of religion, and sociology of knowledge.”

Already by 1946, however, it was also clear that Weber was an enigma. Sigmund Neumann writing in the *Yale Review* points out that “Weber has shared the fate of many other great theorists—to be much talked about and little read. . . . Weber has become a myth among the initiate, who quote him with awe, admiration, or abhorrence without making a direct and full evaluation of his work.” Thus, the Gerth and Mills book “fills a long-felt want.”

The *American Journal of Sociology* review about the Weber mystique begins, “The Heidelberg Myth! This nickname was used in Heidelberg to characterize Max Weber even in his own lifetime. . . . Since his death the danger of a false image of him is even greater.” In this case, however, the reviewer was a survivor of Weber’s Heidelberg circle: Paul Honigsheim. And what Honigsheim (1947) sets out to do in the review is talk about *Weber* using the Gerth and Mills text to structure his comments. Although Honigsheim mentions both the Parsons translation of the *PESC* and “the meritorious publications” about Weber of more than a dozen scholars, including Parsons, these are not his concern. Instead, on his claim to have known Weber “intimately”—so much so that Honigsheim at one point praises the Gerth and Mills translation for rendering Weber’s meaning “correctly, sometimes even better than the difficult German text”—Honigsheim provides his own take on Weber’s personality, religious outlook, politics, and approach, anticipating a series of essays Honigsheim would complete in the late 1940s and 1950 (now Honigsheim 2000).

From the viewpoint of evaluating the presentation of Weber in the context of the three English-language publications that we have been considering here, two points are of significance: First, Honigsheim does not use the review to criticize Parsons’s translation or interpretation of Weber’s work, nor to contrast *From Max Weber* with a Parsonian interpretation. Second is Honigsheim’s own claim that “the religious factor is the determining one in Weber’s life. This is in the last instance Protestantism, indeed not state church or Biblicism but rather individualistic Protestantism. . . . Also Weber’s political attitude is based on it.” In

this view, the *PESC* is part of a larger *political* project on the part of a thinker who “soon became convinced that Germany and Protestantism were approaching catastrophe.” The essay “Science as a Vocation” is Weber’s *apologia*. This view of Weber, though certainly filtered through Honigsheim’s own experiences, posits neither a false unity nor a radical disjuncture in Weber’s writings but the unfolding of a personality through times that were neither easy nor stable.<sup>15</sup>

*Canonization: The Emergence of a Sociological Classic*

Sometime between its initial German publication and the 1964 centenary of Weber’s birth, the *PESC* entered the sociological canon as a core text and Max Weber was accepted as one of the most influential and consequential figures of the discipline. The essay became a part of the canon slowly and without fanfare; there was, after all, no counterpart in American sociology to the Synod of Rome (382 c.e.) or subsequent gatherings that shaped and defined the biblical canon. We nevertheless quite agree with those who see Talcott Parsons’s role as of central importance in elevating Weber and in pushing for the centrality of the *PESC* in understanding Weber’s overall sociological preoccupations. Parsons was, after all, an inveterate promoter with a calling to bring as many as possible into the big tent that was to become his version of structural functionalism. Moreover, his *Structure of Social Action* was not, like Becker’s work, merely an exercise in the history of ideas. Rather, it was a concerted attempt to offer a sociological program predicated on what he argued were heretofore unappreciated convergences among key classical figures, with Durkheim and Weber having pride of place in his formulation. In terms of the specific significance of the *PESC*, this book was important insofar as he offered one of the earliest attempts to locate the thesis in terms of Weber’s larger comparative work on the world religions. Given that Parsons trained generations of sociologists, many of whom played instrumental roles in shaping post-World War II American sociology, it is not surprising that his influence would be

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<sup>15</sup> To some extent Honigsheim is only paraphrasing Marianne Weber’s assessment (1975: 335) that Weber “concerned himself at an early age with the question of the world-shaping significance of ideal forces. Perhaps this tendency of his quest for knowledge—a *permanent concern with religion*—was the form in which the genuine religiosity of his maternal family lived on in him.”

widespread. In addition, Parsons was a major force behind the organization and advancement of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, which has played an enormous role in the advancement of the sociology of religion.

At the same time, Parsons's effect can be overstated. Of the four figures central to *Structure*, Pareto and Marshall failed to achieve lasting impact. Durkheim's location in the pantheon was already underway due to his influence among leaders of the Chicago School. Hence, Parsons's greatest contribution may have been to attempt to intertwine Weber and Durkheim through a selective reading of each, wherein the Weberian Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism become so merged as to become the Durkheimian American sacred; this is especially evidenced in Parsons's essay "Christianity and Modern Industrial Society" (1964) and is taken up in other respects in Bellah's work on civil religion (1967). Meanwhile, despite Parsons's efforts to dismiss Marx, certainly within his lifetime he saw Marx's status in the discipline rise dramatically. Finally, Parsons's ambivalence about Simmel—reflected by the fact that he penned a chapter on him for *Structure* but decided not to use it—meant that he played no role in the subsequent rise in stature of a contemporary of Weber whom Weber himself had endeavored to advance (cf. Jaworski 1997). In addition, when Parsons intertwined Weber and Durkheim he transformed Weber into something other than a historical sociologist. Indeed, the centrality of history and historical specificity gets lost in the quest for abstract theory. Moreover, in terms of the consequences for the fate of the *PESC* thesis, the result was a host of ahistorical transformations of the thesis, the most notable of which was Gerhard Lenski's *The Religious Factor* (1961), which treated the Protestant "work ethic" as timeless and placeless—thus seriously misreading Weber. It was these outcomes that underlay Greeley's call for a moratorium, though he had himself participated in them.

Concurrent with Parsons's efforts was the combined impact of a group of émigré scholars who were forced to flee Germany due to Hitler's rise to power. Preeminent among these was Hans Gerth, who with Mills articulated a left-Weberian interpretation of Weber (see Oakes and Vidich 1999). Though subsequently not well known in the discipline, Alexander von Schelting had an impact on an important cadre of graduate students at Columbia during the 1930s, requiring them to translate excerpts of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. Reinhard Bendix, who viewed himself as having an elective affinity with Weber's antiutopian thinking, his belief in indeterminacy, and his historical comparative

approach, would offer yet another interpretation of Weber that was at odds with the thrust of the Parsonian version. The publication in 1960 of his “intellectual portrait” of Weber would afford many non-German-reading sociologists the first significant analysis of the Weberian corpus in biographical and historical context.

In addition, one institution in particular became something of a bastion of Weberian sociology: the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research (which began as the University in Exile). When Alvin Johnson recruited a faculty, he selected Emil Lederer because, as he wrote, “As Max Weber was the most dynamic figure in German social science, I chose for my group leader Lederer. He, while not a slavish disciple of Weber, was deeply influenced by his thought” (Rutkoff and Scott 1986: 96–97). Lederer, who was also one of those under whom Parsons himself had studied in Germany, was joined by others equally influenced by Weberian thought, including Hans Speier, Carl Mayer, Adolph Lowe, and Albert Salomon. Of these scholars, Salomon was most consequential in introducing this perspective on Weber’s thought to American sociologists, chiefly through a series of articles that appeared in the opening issues of *Social Research*, the New School’s house organ (1934, 1935a, 1935b).

In terms of the *PESC*, in 1944 Ephraim Fischhoff, who was then a lecturer at the New School, published an assessment of the intellectual controversies surrounding Weber’s essay in which he makes a cogent case against idealist readings of the thesis. (Parsons is never cited in the essay.) He considers Weber’s intentions to involve a rejection of a mechanistic approach to historical change that he associated with some versions of Marxism, though Fischhoff thinks that Weber’s thought was closer to that of Marx than many commentators realized. He writes, “Weber’s limited thesis was merely that in the formation of this pattern of rationally ordered life, with its energetic and unremitting pursuit of a goal and eschewal of all magical escapes, the religious component must be considered an important factor. How important he was unable to say, and indeed he felt that in historical imputation such quantification is impossible” (1944: 63).

Parsons’s students themselves also advanced the canonical status of the *PESC*. Foremost, certainly was Parsons’s early student Robert Merton’s first book, *Science, Technology, and Society in Seventeenth-Century England*, originally published in 1938, which attempted to explain the rise of a modern scientific worldview in a manner clearly indebted to Weber’s *PESC* thesis. One of the curious features of Merton’s subsequent career

is that, unlike his Harvard mentor, he distanced himself from Weber as he embraced Durkheimian theory. Nevertheless, given his prominence in the discipline, this early work no doubt served a role in advancing Weber's thesis, while creating a distinct variant—namely, “the Merton thesis”—in the sociology of science. Later, Benton Johnson developed a series of important contributions to the sociology of religion itself by building upon Weber's church-sect distinction (1957, 1963, 1971). Johnson not only made specific theoretical contributions by working within Weber's larger corpus to relate the church-sect organizational dynamic to styles of religious prophecy, but also his essay “Do Holiness Churches Socialize in Dominant Values?” (1961) demonstrated a continuing association between strict Protestant sectarianism and integration into the contemporary American economy in the late 1950s. Within the sociological study of religion institutionally, Johnson also has the distinction of being the only person elected to the presidency of all three of the American scholarly societies in this field: the Association for the Sociology of Religion, the Religious Research Association, and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion—the latter being the first to which he was so elected, after editing its journal for several years.

While it is difficult to unpack the varied, complex, and doubtless intersecting ways in which these intellectual conduits brought the *PESC* into the sociological mainstream, what is clear is that this particular element of the Weberian corpus became the one to which sociologists in training were most likely to be exposed. And here we return to the import of Parsons, for his translation is obviously a major reason for this fact. Frank Knight's earlier translation effort did not have the same impact, in part because as an economist he was located outside the discipline, and in part because *General Economic History* did not readily lend itself to explicitly sociological use. Meanwhile, Parsons's translation had a sixteen-year lead on *From Max Weber*. Moreover, by presenting the two parts of the essay as a whole, along with the 1920 “Author's Introduction” in a monograph format, the volume had a coherence that the brief essays and excerpts contained in the Gerth and Mills collection did not. Thus, the latter lent itself to be a ready complement to the *PESC*, and both were aided by the fact that the post-World War II boom in higher education was linked to the advent of cheap paperback books, creating the preconditions for an expanding market for this classic in the making—a concluding twist of the material and the ideal that would not have been the least uncongenial to Weber's appreciation of the ironies of history.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE EMERGENCE OF MORMON STUDIES IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Armand L. Mauss

The study of Mormons as a separate academic subdiscipline developed gradually from the middle to the end of the twentieth century. In its chronology and trajectory, this development was not unlike that of the sociology of religion itself: At midcentury, the sociology of Mormons, like the sociology of religion more generally, had a very small literature base and was generally not recognized by scholars in either sociology or religion as an important subdiscipline. The dominant academic paradigm for the study of religion, including Mormonism, assumed that the secularization process, so inevitable in modern societies, would eventually transform all “sects” into “churches” and thence into societal irrelevance. The resurgence of the sociology of religion as a viable and indispensable subdiscipline was stimulated by the unexpected rise of new religious movements (NRMs) and by various expressions of religious fundamentalism starting in the late 1960s, which required, in turn, a serious reassessment, before the end of the century, of the time-honored “secularization” assumption, and a new agenda, guided by a new paradigm, for the sociological study of religion.<sup>1</sup>

The study of Mormons by social scientists and historians grew in scope and depth as part of this same general resurgence, but other important factors contributed as well. One contributing factor was a rapid rise after mid-century in the general socioeconomic status of Mormons, particularly in average education level, as Mormon veterans of World War II took advantage of the educational benefits of the “G.I. Bill” to seek college degrees, including advanced degrees, often outside of Utah. Some of these young scholars opted for academic careers in the social sciences and history, where they began to devote some of their career efforts to studies of their own religious heritage. Another

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<sup>1</sup> This paradigmatic transformation has been famously traced by R. Stephen Warner (1993).

contributing factor was the decision by the LDS leadership itself, at least temporarily during the 1970s, to sponsor the research and publication of academic histories of its church and people (Walker et al. 2001: ch. 3; Arrington 1998). At about the same time, the church created its own Research Information Division, an internal social research enterprise that thrives to the present day (Mauss 2001: 162–63). Still another contributing factor was the decision by a key editor at the University of Illinois Press, starting in the mid-1960s, to build a special “Mormon list” of academic studies of Mormons and Mormonism, a list that grew rapidly during the ensuing decades.

### *Major Publishers of Scholarly Literature on the Mormons*

As a result of these several circumstances, a genuine, non-polemical, scholarly literature on the Mormons has greatly proliferated since the 1950s (Walker et al. 2001: chs 3 and 5). We shall begin with a review of the major publishers responsible for this literature.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Book Publishers*

The University of Illinois Press became the single most prolific publisher of Mormon-related scholarly works between 1965 and 2005, producing nearly seventy titles, most of which are still in print ([www.press.uillinois.edu](http://www.press.uillinois.edu)). The impetus for this rather surprising development might have come from the unexpected success of two of the earliest products of this outpouring (Flanders 1965; Oaks and Hill 1975), both of which focused on the brief but dramatic Mormon chapter in Illinois state history (1839–1846). The full development of the Mormon list at this university press would not have occurred, however, without the enterprise of one of the senior editors, Elizabeth Dulany, who took a special interest in building that list for reasons that are not entirely clear. Not a Mormon herself, Dulany might have simply considered the historic Mormon connection with Illinois to be a fruitful source of new and unexploited scholarly material. She might also have been influenced by her close friend Jan Shipps, nationally the best known non-Mormon scholar in Mormon studies. Whatever the reasons, it would be fair to say that the University of Illinois Press is largely responsible for the

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<sup>2</sup> For major library depositories of materials on Mormonism, see Whittaker 1995.

creation of the solid literature base on which the new subdiscipline of Mormon Studies has been built to date.<sup>3</sup> Most of these works are historical in nature, but many of them also have come out of sociology and various other social science disciplines (e.g. Bringhurst and Smith 2004; Cornwall et al. 1994; Lyman 1986; Mauss 1994 and 2003; Shepherd and Shepherd 1998; Yorgason 2003).

University presses in Utah have also been important publishers of books on Mormon subjects, but not to the extent that one might perhaps expect in a state that is so predominantly Mormon in population. The University of Utah Press ([www.uofupress.com](http://www.uofupress.com)) had periodically published a few important works on Mormons all along (e.g. Erickson 1975; Embry 1987; Fife and Fife 1980; Nelson 1952; Shepherd and Shepherd 1984); but in the 1980s an editorial decision was apparently made to relinquish such publishing to others, perhaps because of the constant political strains between Mormons and non-Mormons on the editorial board and on the university faculty more generally. The recent publication of a biography of an important mid-twentieth century president of the church (Prince and Wright 2005) might signal an end to that press's seeming boycott of Mormon studies.

The Utah State University Press in Logan ([www.usu.edu/usupress](http://www.usu.edu/usupress)) has not been reluctant to publish important historical and other works on Mormons in recent decades (e.g. Bush 2004; Card et al. 1990; Gerlach 1982; Tullis 1987), but its resources have not made possible a great breadth and variety. Brigham Young University attempted to maintain a press during the 1960s and 1970s, but lately this press is little more than a logo used occasionally on publications under the auspices of certain specific university units, such as the Religious Studies Center or the periodical *BYU Studies*. Such books as have appeared in history or the social sciences have usually been published under such auspices or else in collaboration with other presses ([www.byupress.edu/publications](http://www.byupress.edu/publications)). Outside of Utah and Illinois, very few other university presses have taken on Mormon-related books, as will be apparent from a glance down the bibliography provided at the end of this chapter. Most prominent among those that have is Oxford University Press, which has recently

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<sup>3</sup> With Dulany's retirement, however, this press has not continued its special attention to Mormon studies. This development further emphasizes the uniqueness of Dulany's historical contribution to the building of the academic literature base now available on the Mormons.

published several such books, but the University of Oklahoma Press has recently also decided to expand its Mormon list.

Of the commercial presses, by far the most important one in Mormon Studies is Signature Books, based in Salt Lake City, which has produced a number of distinguished scholarly works about Mormons, both in history and in current issues, since its inception in 1980 ([www.signaturebooks.com](http://www.signaturebooks.com)). Some of its books have been quite critical, at least implicitly, of traditional Mormon truth-claims, policies, or practices, which have made it less appealing to both authors and readers of a more orthodox bent. Nevertheless, it is the single most prolific commercial publisher of scholarly works on the Mormons. Greg Kofford Books of Salt Lake City ([www.koffordbooks.com](http://www.koffordbooks.com)) also specializes in Mormon Studies, but it is a much newer and smaller operation and primarily a specialized publisher in limited editions of important works that might not otherwise be published. So far it has published works in history and theology, with little or nothing of a social-scientific kind. Not surprisingly, the biggest commercial publisher of Mormon-related works in the world is the Deseret Book Company, based in Salt Lake City, and controlled by the LDS Church ([www.deseretbook.com](http://www.deseretbook.com)). Until the 1990s, it was a major publisher of scholarly (if somewhat apologetic) works, but in recent years it has largely abandoned this field and now specializes instead in popular and devotional books, videos, CDs, accessories, and the like. A major exception to this generalization was its 2005 publication of an important biography of a church president (Kimball 2005), which, as its preface makes clear, was an unusual and controversial decision. With such rare exceptions, Deseret Book would not be a very productive place to look for new works of scholarship in Mormon Studies today.

#### *Periodical Literature in Social Science and Religion*

In the social scientific study of religion, the three major journals based in the United States—the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (JSSR), the *Review of Religious Research* (RRR), and *Sociology of Religion* (SoR, formerly *Sociological Analysis*), each of which is published by a parent scholarly society—have all carried articles on Latter-day Saints on a fairly regular basis since the mid-1960s, and with increasing frequency in more recent years. A bibliographic search not including these journals would be woefully inadequate for anyone studying Mormons. The mainstream journals of sociology, whether national (*American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociology*, and *Social Forces*) or regional (e.g.,

*Social Inquiry* and *Sociological Perspectives*, formerly the *Pacific Sociological Review*), have carried articles on Mormons much less frequently. The journals of such sister disciplines as anthropology and psychology have carried articles on Mormons even more rarely (but see [www.ingentaconnect.com](http://www.ingentaconnect.com) and [www.psywww.com/psyrelig](http://www.psywww.com/psyrelig) >Resources for Further Study >Index of Primary Journals). An interesting development of the past two decades or so is the growing interest in religion by scholars in the discipline of economics, who have contributed significantly to the creation of the “new paradigm” mentioned earlier (cf. [www.religionomics.com](http://www.religionomics.com)). A few articles about Mormons have begun to appear in the pages of journals in economics (e.g. *Journal of Political Economy*), and Mormons are often featured as exemplifying many of the propositions in the new paradigm more generally (Stark and Finke 2000).

#### *Scholarly Societies and Periodicals from the Mormon Subculture*

The generation of Mormon scholars that newly emerged at mid-century began founding its own scholarly societies and journals soon after finishing graduate degrees. Most of these new institutions are interdisciplinary, but theology, history and the social sciences have been the main preoccupations. Nearly all have been founded and maintained entirely independent of church control, sometimes to the dismay of the more conservative church leaders. While these publications include personal essays, devotional articles, fiction, and poetry, they are also the most important periodicals of serious and competent historical and social science scholarship on the Mormons. Most are carefully refereed by expert peers, including many non-Mormons or lapsed Mormons. Premier among these journals is *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, but the others are all produced with equal competence. Following is a brief description of each in the chronological order of its founding.

*Brigham Young University Studies* or *BYU Studies* (1959–), edited and published quarterly in Provo, Utah, at BYU. Articles in theology, history, and the social sciences are peer reviewed and generally of strong scholarly caliber, but given the official Church auspices, the editorial policy is cautious and faith affirming. Articles vary among research-based pieces, personal essays, fiction, and poetry (<http://byustudies.byu.edu> >Products>Articles).

*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (1966–), published quarterly in Salt Lake City but edited in various locations depending on the residence of the editor. This journal is independently owned and published by the Dialogue Foundation of Salt Lake City. Articles are peer reviewed

and generally of strong scholarly caliber. Like *BYU Studies*, each issue contains different kinds of articles, many of which deal with current Mormon history or social issues, including some rather controversial ones. *Dialogue* produces a DVD containing all back issues, fully indexed, searchable, and updated annually ([www.dialoguejournal.com](http://www.dialoguejournal.com)).

*Journal of Mormon History*, or *JMH* (1974–), published annually, 1974–91, then semi-annually from 1992–2004, and thereafter thrice annually. The *JMH* is independently owned and published by the 1200-member Mormon History Association (est. 1965) in Salt Lake City. This Association holds annual conferences at various sites of special historical significance for Mormons in the United States and elsewhere. Articles are peer reviewed, generally of strong scholarly caliber, and exclusively historical in nature, though sometimes recent or current history. This journal also produces a DVD containing all back issues, fully indexed, searchable, and updated periodically ([www.mhahome.org](http://www.mhahome.org)).

*Sunstone* (1975–), edited and published in Salt Lake City in glossy magazine format, usually four or five times annually. It is independently owned by the Sunstone Foundation of Salt Lake City, which also sponsors the annual Sunstone Symposium in Utah each summer, as well as smaller regional symposia at other times of the year. Not a scholarly journal in the usual sense, *Sunstone* is nevertheless a “high-brow” magazine for intellectuals, featuring shorter articles than those found in the other periodicals. Many of the articles are substantial scholarly treatments of theological, historical, or current social issues. Of all the publications mentioned here, *Sunstone* is the one most likely to publish controversial and even irreverent articles, stories, letters, news items, and cartoons ([www.sunstoneonline.com](http://www.sunstoneonline.com)).

*Mormon Social Science Association* (MSSA): Founded in the late 1970s as the “Society for the Sociological Study of Mormon Life” (SSSML), this group changed its cumbersome name in the mid-1990s. It originally met with the annual conferences of the Pacific Sociological Association, but since the mid-1980s it has met with the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and has sponsored two or three special sessions in each of that society’s annual conferences and sponsors the Glenn M. Vernon Memorial Lecture there in alternate years. It has a membership of fewer than a hundred, perhaps a third of whom are occasional attendees or participants in the SSSR/MSSA conferences, and it publishes a semi-annual *Newsletter* ([www.mormonsocialscience.org](http://www.mormonsocialscience.org)). MSSA sponsored and paid for the production of the September 1984, issue of the *Review of Religious Research* containing a special collection

of Mormon-related articles. A collection of essays marking the fiftieth anniversary of Thomas F. O’Dea’s *The Mormons*, currently in press, was sponsored by the MSSA.

*John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* (1981–) is published annually by the John Whitmer Historical Association of Independence, Missouri, a scholarly society founded by members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), recently renamed the “Community of Christ” to emphasize a growing departure from its Mormon heritage toward a more general American and liberal Protestant orientation. The editorial office of the journal moves depending on the residence of the editor, but it is usually located in the Midwest. The *JWHA Journal* publishes peer-reviewed articles of strong scholarly caliber with special focus on the history and experience of members of the RLDS Church (or Community of Christ), although many of its articles are also relevant to the Utah Mormon experience, and some of its authors are members of the Utah-based church ([www.jwha.info](http://www.jwha.info)).

#### *Modern Beginnings of Social Scientific Literature on the Mormons*

As important as the periodical literature has been in the field of Mormon Studies, I will cite it very rarely in this chapter, precisely because it is so voluminous that I could not do it justice in the space available here. Scholars searching the periodical literature for articles on Mormons will benefit greatly by a single and massive bibliography published at the end of the twentieth century and containing more than 1100 pages, indexed both by author and by topic, and covering all published work and unpublished theses and dissertations in Mormon history from the very beginnings of the religion through 1997 (Allen et al. 2000). “History” is again defined by these authors loosely enough to include a great deal of social science, and in fact the final hundred pages contain a special topical guide devoted specifically to *social science* works on the Mormons (Mauss and Reynolds 2000). The works cited in this social science listing are integrated by author with the alphabetical index of the entire bibliography, hence users can browse both historical and social science listings by author in the same search. Since its publication, this bibliography continues to be updated periodically on an electronic site at BYU: <http://mormonhistory.byu.edu>. The electronic updates do not identify social science works separately, but many of the latter get picked up as part of the general historical collection. For the remainder of this essay,

I will focus mainly on the *books* that have been especially important in defining the field of Mormon Studies and leave the reader to search the periodical venues that I have outlined above for articles of interest to specific research projects.

Elsewhere I have commented at some length on the sparse social science literature about Mormons that had accumulated *before* midcentury (Mauss 2001), and I have identified the major works that marked the emergence of the prodigious literature since that time. Prior to midcentury, the books on Mormons were largely polemical in nature, preoccupied by apologetics, on the Mormon side, and by a sort of dismissive bemusement from the few non-Mormon (and sometimes ex-Mormon) scholars who deigned to address Mormon topics at all (Walker et al. 2001). This was much less true of the social science works than of the historical ones. Social scientists focused mainly on Mormon agricultural economics, village and community organization, and, of course, family life, with particular reference to the notorious nineteenth-century institution of polygyny (usually called “polygamy”). These works were not obviously polemical and were most often written by competently trained second- and third-generation Mormons or ex-Mormons (Mauss 2001: 153–56).<sup>4</sup>

As midcentury arrived, a few remarkable books appeared that have truly stood the test of time. These were written by practicing Mormons (e. g., Brooks 1950; Arrington 1958), lapsed Mormons (Anderson 1942; Brodie 1946; Nelson 1952), and non-Mormons (O’Dea 1957). All of these were largely historical in genre, but they were guided also by modern positivist canons of scholarship and informed by certain theoretical concepts from social science—from political economy, in the case of Brooks, from sociology in the cases of Anderson, Nelson, and O’Dea, from economics in the case of Arrington, and from psychology in the case of Brodie. This last-mentioned was a celebrated, if debunking, psychobiography of the founding Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, an approach appreciated far less by Jefferson partisans when Brodie later applied it to the third president of the United States (Bringham 1999). The Brooks book was the first analytical and even-handed analysis of perhaps the major skeleton in the Mormon historical closet, namely

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<sup>4</sup> This bibliographic essay (Mauss 2001), along with the entire collection of which it is a part (Walker et al. 2001), can be accessed electronically in its entirety through the website of the University of Illinois Press: [www.press.uillinois.edu](http://www.press.uillinois.edu) >Electronic Publishing>Books>By Author.

the Mountain Meadows Massacre of 1857, and it elicited the wrath of the church fathers. Anderson's was a sympathetic institutional study of Mormon village life in southern Utah. O'Dea's was a respectful treatment of the history and scriptures of the Mormons, followed by an admiring analysis of major Mormon values and institutions as they had developed by the middle of the twentieth century, and concluded with a rather prescient prognosis on the likely impact of modern secular thought and education on the still-insular Mormons. Arrington, later to become the official LDS Church Historian (1972–82), drew upon his background in agriculture and economics to write a definitive and analytical history of the Mormon settlement of Utah, which has had no competitors and certainly has never been bested (see Alexander 1991).

There is no avoiding the reality that the great majority of academic scholarship on the Mormons since midcentury has been historical rather than social scientific, and that furthermore it has focused far more on the formative *nineteenth-century history* of the Mormons than on the rapid modernization that occurred during the twentieth century. These historical works have been the products of competent modern scholarship, however, so they are entitled to some mention here—at least those of a more general nature. Of course, it is not always easy to distinguish history from social science, since the best history is written through some sort of social-science framework; otherwise it is just narrative and explains little. Conversely, the best social science occurs in carefully analyzed historical contexts; otherwise, it easily becomes ahistorical abstraction with no obvious empirical applications. Here I will draw a rather porous border between the two disciplines but will emphasize books written by social scientists or by historians who have used social science frameworks and concepts.

As I just indicated, very few historical books have appeared on the *modern Mormon Church*—*i.e.*, for the twentieth century in general and particularly for the period after World War II. Alexander (1986), Flake (2004), Lyman (1986) and Yorgason (2003) all deal with the crucial period between 1890 and 1930, when both the religion and the culture of the Latter-day Saints was in transition from geographic and political isolation to national assimilation—a process with powerful consequences for the Church as well as for the nation. The period after the 1930s, and especially after World War II, has received even less attention by historians, even though it was also a time of drastic change in Mormonism. One of the reasons that Mormon scholars (especially those employed by the Church) have favored early over recent Mormon histories might

well be the increased sensitivity of Church leaders to treatments of recent or current developments in Mormonism that are controversial (e.g. race, feminism, dissent, or church-state issues). Historians working for the Church during the Arrington era did produce some very competent general histories, which include *chapters* on the mid- and late twentieth century (e.g. Arrington and Bitton 1992[1976]; and Allen and Leonard 1992[1979]), but the only historical study devoted entirely to twentieth-century Mormonism is by Richard Cowan (1985), written primarily for internal consumption and thus rather superficial, with an apologetic, triumphalist, and uncritical approach.

Sociologists Gordon and Gary Shepherd (1984) did a meticulous content analysis of changing official discourse in the LDS Church across time, which reflected and verified the major changes in Mormon doctrine and culture that have been described in the general histories. Focusing specifically on *contemporary* Mormons, however (*i.e.*, mid-twentieth century onward) very few books have been published, either by historians or by social scientists. The earliest of these was Leone (1979), a non-Mormon anthropologist who wrote an engaging quasi-Marxist analysis of the transformation of the Mormon Church from its nineteenth-century roots to its modern institutionalized form. Sociologists Cornwall et al. (1994) prepared an important collection of essays on modern Mormonism, while White (1987) and Mauss (1994), employed frameworks that analyzed Mormon developments as responses to the external American religious and cultural environments since midcentury. Some recent biographies too, though not intended as sociological treatments, are, in effect, administrative histories and quite analytical and revealing about the social and organizational changes within the LDS Church during the twentieth century (e.g. Kimball 2005; Prince and Wright 2005; Quinn 1983, 1997, 2002; and Shipps 2000).

### *Major Topics and Issues in Modern Mormon Life*

Aside from social and administrative histories, social scientists writing on Mormons have tended to focus on certain major topics and issues, rather than on historical narratives *per se*.<sup>5</sup> The books produced on

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<sup>5</sup> I will not discuss in this chapter any of the largely historical literature dealing with the many Mormon *schismatic* movements or denominations, except for the polygamous

the most frequently addressed of these topics and issues will now be considered separately.<sup>6</sup>

*General Collections on Contemporary Mormons*

A good sampling of the variety of social science writing on today's Mormons can be found in several edited collections appearing in the last decade or so. The first of these was put together by a team of sociologists at BYU and published by the University of Illinois Press (Cornwall et al. 1994). It contains sixteen essays, virtually all written originally for this collection, and arranged in four general sections: Church Growth and Change; Mormon Society and Culture; The Mormon Missionary Experience; and Women and Minorities. The authors, all well-published scholars, are a mixture of practicing and non-practicing Mormons and non-Mormons. An even more varied collection was edited a little later by Douglas J. Davies (1996), a British Anglican scholar and life-long student of Mormons. This collection is divided into sections entitled Dimensions of Identity; The Expansion of Mormonism; Emotional and Social Life; Early Mormonism; Female Factors; Mormon Scripture and Theology; and The Future of Mormon Studies. The collection came out of a conference on Mormon Studies held under Davies's auspices in the UK at Nottingham University in 1995.

A third edited volume is a very useful collection of articles that had nearly all been published earlier in various scholarly journals, so many

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ones. See Shields (1990) for general descriptions of these. For individual case studies, see Anderson (1981), Baer (1988), Launius and Thatcher (1994), and Walker (1998). The only one of these offshoots that remains numerically significant and still vital is the Missouri-based Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (est. 1860) or Community of Christ. For the best treatments of this RLDS movement and its recent developments, see its periodicals *Restoration Studies* and the *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal*, mentioned above, and the following books: Edwards (1984, 1991), Launius and Spillman (1991), and Shields (1986).

<sup>6</sup> I will also not include in this chapter any discussions of Mormon theology, doctrine, beliefs, or apologetics, which are generally considered outside the realm of social science, except as they might be discussed as influences on behavior. Most works discussing or analyzing Mormon behavior *qua* Mormon include some reference to the Mormon teachings implicated in such behavior. Responsible descriptions and explanations of Mormon teachings, beliefs, and practices will be found in C. Bushman (2006), C. and R. Bushman (2001), Davies (2000, 2003), Givens (2004, 2007), Riess and Bigelow (2005), and Williams (2003). The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (Ludlow 1992) is also authoritative on all aspects of the Mormon religion, but is, of course, entirely uncritical, since it was prepared under LDS Church supervision.

of them were already somewhat dated. Among the criteria used by editor James Duke for this collection was avoiding articles “with an obvious ideological bias,” while at the same time trying to demonstrate “the close connection that can and does exist between good scientific scholarship and a committed faith.” Accordingly, the selected articles “reflect favorably on the LDS Church because LDS people, for the most part, live a lifestyle that is conducive to favorable outcomes” (1998: 6). The articles are not arranged into topical sections, most of them are written by BYU faculty members, and the collection is published by the BYU Religious Studies Center. By contrast, Eric Eliason (2001), of the BYU English faculty has assembled an interesting miscellany of eleven essays, most of which were written by non-Mormons and are historical in nature, rather than sociological. Of all these general collections, that by Cornwall et al. remains probably the best quick sampling of the variety of social science literature on contemporary Mormons.

*Behavioral Consequences of Mormon Religious Belief and Commitment*

This topic might be regarded as the single most important one on which social scientists should focus. A large and varied periodical literature on this topic has in fact emerged (Mauss and Reynolds 2000) covering both *personal* consequences (e.g., observance of rituals, values, norms, and life-style choices) and *collective* consequences (e.g., general culture traits, educational attainment, arts and recreation, folklore, health and longevity, social stratification).

Despite the rich periodical literature, however, not many treatments have been book-length, though some old classics (Ericksen 1975[1922]; O’Dea 1957) still retain currency and validity, at least for early twentieth century Mormons. Other books published have covered the following topics: contrasts between Mormons and others in traditional community values and norms (Sorenson 1997; Vogt and Albert 1966); various general demographic traits such as age structure, migration, mortality, morbidity, fertility, socioeconomic status, crime, and juvenile delinquency (Heaton et al. 1996, 2004); health and medical practices (Bush 1993); the rich heritage of distinctively Mormon folklore (Fife and Fife 1980[1956]); music, arts, and popular culture (Givens 2007; Hicks 1989); contemporary Mormon perspectives on conservation and the environment (Handley et al. 2006); ideal economic values and practices to reduce poverty (Lucas and Woodworth 1996; Mangum and Blumell 1993); proselyting techniques and other factors responsible for

Mormon growth (Stark 2005); the nature of life in Mormon congregational communities (Taber 1993); and Mormon family life, which is discussed next as a separate topic.

### *Mormon Family Life*

Few topics in Mormon studies have received as much attention in the social science literature as family life (and related matters). Indeed, at BYU the social science disciplines are subsumed into the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences. Few scholarly books have appeared on Mormon family life, but the amount of periodical literature is enormous (Mauss and Reynolds 2000: 1119–25). Much of it, furthermore, has appeared in such professional journals as the *Review of Religious Research*, the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* and the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, as well as in the independently published *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. The few books that have appeared have been published under church or private auspices and have emphasized practical over theoretical or scientific considerations (e.g. Bahr et al. 1982; Dyer and Kunz 1986; Thomas 1988). The last-named, though not entirely about Mormons, has some important selections on the Mormon family scene and somewhat more theoretical underpinnings than the others mentioned. Much of the literature in the journals has dealt with premarital and extramarital sexual norms and behavior, especially among Mormon youth (often in contrast with other youth); but sex within marriage has also received a fair amount of attention, especially where birth control is concerned (Corcoran 1994).

As for relationships within families, scores of articles have appeared in recent decades on spousal relationships and parent-child relationships among Mormons (Mauss and Reynolds 2000: 1122–24), but no books beyond the three general ones mentioned above. The single (unmarried) condition presents a special problem in the Mormon community, where theology, social pressures and church programs are all aimed at getting members married. Nevertheless, at least a fourth of all Mormon adults above age 30 are unmarried (at least in the United States), and to address this most “unMormon” of situations, a small periodical literature has emerged in recent years, especially in the pages of *Dialogue* and *Sunstone*.

Relatedly, the homosexual condition among contemporary Mormons has become an increasingly vexing and controversial issue, which the Church (like other conservative churches) has tried to address by

simultaneously reinforcing traditional heterosexual norms while sympathetically acknowledging (at least recently) the predicament of homosexuals in its midst (Phillips 2004). The latter posture can be seen in a new book published under Church auspices (Matis et al. 2006), while the more liberal approach is represented in the collection by Schow et al. (1991). The general predicament for the Church is briefly but well analyzed by Claudia Bushman (2006: 124–29).

*Contemporary “Polygamy”*

One of the most frustrating and ironic developments of recent years for the public relations functionaries in the LDS Church has been the open resurgence of polygyny in the traditional Mormon geographic heartland. Several small sects are practicing polygyny, but none of them has any connection to the main LDS Church, and perhaps only two of them could even be considered schismatic as contrasted with *de novo* sects. The original Church itself abandoned polygyny more than a century ago in a conscientious effort to gain respectability and to assimilate into the American mainstream. In the 1940s and 1950s, the Church even cooperated closely with state and federal authorities to harass and stamp out polygynous schismatics (Bradley 1993), an effort which never quite succeeded. With the liberalizing of sexual and other norms that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, laws against extramarital sex and bigamy have become both obsolete and impossible to enforce.

Accordingly, the polygyny sects have come out from the “underground” and have begun in recent years to make the same arguments about “individual rights” that have worked so well for the national “gay rights” movement. Law enforcement establishments have had to resort to charging violations of laws against child abuse and welfare fraud in an effort to control these sects, but most of them have managed either to stay within the law in such matters or else to avoid surveillance. Meanwhile, neither the sects themselves nor the mass media have made much effort to distinguish them from the mainstream LDS Church, despite an almost desperate public relations campaign by the Church to do so.<sup>7</sup> Having spent the past century becoming one of the most socially conservative institutions in American life, the LDS Church has

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<sup>7</sup> In recent years, Church leaders have made a concerted—but largely unsuccessful—effort to get at least its own members to drop the term “Mormon” altogether in favor of “Latter-day Saints,” “LDS,” or preferably the full name of the Church in general usage.

“switched sides” on the polygyny issue, at least operationally, but it can’t seem to live down its nineteenth-century legacy of “polygamy.”<sup>8</sup> This legacy was so difficult and sensitive a matter during the early twentieth century that few scholars, Mormon or otherwise, were willing to write about it (but see Foster 1981, 1991; Kern 1981; Young 1970[1954]). However, given the recent outpouring of books on polygyny (both past and present), it would seem that scholars today have achieved a certain amount of detachment from the topic. We now see a proliferation of books on both nineteenth-century Mormon polygyny (Compton 1997; Daynes 2001; Hardy 1992; Logue 1988; Nichols 2002) and on contemporary schismatic polygynous sects (Altman and Ginat 1986; Bennion 1998, 2004; Bradley 1993)—or on both, showing the continuity between the two (Van Wagoner 1986).<sup>9</sup> Of special scholarly interest has been the impact and implications of the national campaign against early Mormon polygyny for American politics and jurisprudence (Flake 2004; Gordon 2002).

### *Mormon Women and Feminism*

It is difficult to extricate this topic from the two just discussed on family life, whether monogamous or polygynous. Aside from family life, the main gender issue in the scholarly literature is the manifest loss in power and status for women which resulted from organizational and administrative changes in the LDS Church and its culture after midcentury (C. Bushman 2006: 111–24; Mauss 1994). This development has been the subject of a great deal of scholarly (and polemical) literature, mostly from critics inside the Church, especially in journals such as *Dialogue*. Discussion and analysis have centered on both internal ecclesiastical issues (such as extending the lay priesthood to women or otherwise involving them in decision-making at higher echelons) and on external political issues (e.g., the LDS Church’s intervention in the

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<sup>8</sup> I say “operationally” because theologically the Church still holds to the doctrine of eternal marriage—namely that marriages in Mormon temples are “sealed” for all eternity—and it permits widowed men to be sealed in temples to subsequent wives for life in both this world and the next. Since the Church has never renounced the *theology* of polygyny, but only its current practice, the polygyny scandal remains unresolved in Mormon history, and the schismatics have grounds to claim that they are the true heirs of original Mormonism—*i.e.*, that mainstream Mormonism has “sold out” its heritage for respectability.

<sup>9</sup> Readers interested in the Utah campaigns for and against “polygamy” might wish to consult two websites: [www.principlevoices.org](http://www.principlevoices.org) (pro) and [www.polygamyinfo.com](http://www.polygamyinfo.com) (con). Both have smooth and appealing styles.

International Women's Year meetings of 1977 and the Equal Rights Amendment ratification campaign of the 1970s and 1980s).

The periodical literature on all this has been quite extensive (Mauss and Reynolds 2000: 1126–30); but a few books have also appeared, some of them historical—thus functioning as oblique criticisms of the contemporary situation of Mormon women by pointing to a more liberal past (Beecher and Anderson 1987; Bush 2004; C. Bushman 1997). Others have been sharply critical and quite controversial in the Mormon scholarly community (Bradley 2005; Hanks 1992; Smith 1994; Warenski 1978). Recent scholarship (Madsen and Silver 2005) seems to be more centrist in nature, seeking a common ground informed by a uniquely Mormon historical female experience. One institutional history of the Mormon women's auxiliary (the Relief Society) has been written under church auspices (Derr et al. 1992), but is nevertheless quite valuable despite its obvious restraint in dealing with the kinds of issues mentioned above.

### *Race and Ethnicity*

During the 1950s, the world began to discover that Jim Crow existed in Utah and in the Mormon Church, just as it did in the rest of the country (Gerlach 1982). In the Church it took the form mainly of withholding the priesthood from men known to have black African ancestry. This was a more conspicuous form of discrimination than in most denominations, because the Mormons have a lay priesthood extended in degrees to virtually all males over the age of twelve. Other denominations in those days had few if any more black clergy than the Mormons did (except, of course, for the predominantly black denominations), since most required formal seminary training for ordination, and seminaries were about as racially restrictive as were law schools and medical schools until midcentury. Not having professional seminaries, the Mormons simply applied their racial restriction up front and publicly, and they were rarely questioned or criticized until the rise of the national civil rights movement in the 1960s.<sup>10</sup> At that point, a substantial periodical literature, both inside and outside the Church,

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<sup>10</sup> Interestingly enough, Thomas F. O'Dea, in his now-classic *The Mormons* (1957), did not think to mention the race issue among the "sources of strain and conflict" that he envisioned for Mormonism in the future.

began to consider and criticize the Mormon priesthood restriction, and by the early 1970s it had become a public relations nightmare for the Church (Mauss and Reynolds 2000: 1131–33). After a few more years, during which public attention seemed diverted elsewhere, the President of the Church announced that a divine revelation had ended the racially restrictive policy.

Several important books have considered this entire episode, as well as its continuing residue, from both historical and sociological perspectives. The first of these (Bringhurst 1981) is mostly historical in nature and traces the origins of the race policy from some of the pseudepigraphic scriptures published by the founding Mormon prophet Joseph Smith (who, however, did ordain blacks while he was alive), through the administration of his successor Brigham Young (who actually first introduced the restriction), all the way down to the point where the policy was finally dropped. A second book (Bush and Mauss, 1984), made up of articles reprinted from *Dialogue*, adds further depth to the history. It includes a review of the major developments, internal and external, leading up to the eventual elimination of the priesthood ban and a retrospective assessment of the ban's legacy. Embry (1994) provided a very revealing picture of the perceptions of black Mormons about all of this in a book based upon interviews with a couple hundred informants, some of whom had been LDS members before the ban was dropped. Mauss (2003) placed the erstwhile priesthood restriction in the historical context of other Mormon racist conceptions defining themselves as divinely chosen Israelites, (along with the Jews), and the Native Americans or "Indians" as fallen Israelites with a divine future destiny contingent upon their accepting the Mormon gospel and Book of Mormon (the putative history of the ancestors of the Indians). Bringhurst and Smith (2004) brought together a collection of essays pointing to the problematic residue of racist ideas surviving in Mormon popular thinking even after the end of the formal ban on priesthood.

So much attention was paid to the Mormon struggle with its discriminatory policy toward blacks that relationships have been largely overlooked with two other major ethnic groups also important in traditional Mormon teaching and folklore. The first of these is the Jews, whom the Mormons define as the chosen Israelite tribe of Judah, who in partnership with the tribe of Ephraim (an identity appropriated by the Mormons) have a divine destiny to prepare the world for the

eventual return of the Messiah. The result of this teaching has apparently been an especially low rate of anti-Semitism among Mormons. The well-known proselytizing program of the Mormons has largely exempted the Jews, apparently on the assumption that the Jews have some sort of “side-deal” with God for the time being, though eventually, in God’s own time, the Jews will be converted. This conception of the Jews, and the accompanying reduction in anti-Semitism, are clear from a number of studies of historical and sociological kinds (Epperson 1992; Mauss 2003).

The other racial category that looms large in traditional Mormon lore is the indigenous peoples of the western hemisphere, called variously Indians or Native Americans. The Book of Mormon, the major product of Joseph Smith’s divine revelations, is presented to the world as a history of the ancestors of these aboriginal peoples, originally Israelites, who arrived on the shores of the hemisphere after fleeing Palestine shortly before the fall of the Kingdom of Judah in about 600 B.C.E. (Smith 2004[1830]; Hardy 2003). The book portrays, among many other things, the original flowering of civilization among these people, followed by their political and spiritual decline and fall as a result of forgetting the God of Israel. The fallen and degenerate descendants of these people, called “Lamanites” in the Book of Mormon, are understood by Mormons to be the indigenous peoples discovered in the hemisphere by the various European explorers in the fifteenth century or earlier. The book promises that they will be redeemed and will eventually achieve their divine destiny as a highly civilized people if they will accept the Judaeo-Christian gospel taught in the Book of Mormon and brought to them by the missionaries.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Mormons understood “Lamanites” to refer primarily to the tribal peoples of North America, and the Church focused intensive missionary efforts on them throughout that century and again in a special campaign during the mid- and late twentieth century. The latter period included an extensive program of free high school and college education and lodging for hundreds of youthful converts from various Indian tribes, especially Navajos. Careful evaluations of all such efforts by church educators revealed that these programs achieved considerable impact on the secular and economic life-chances of the young converts, but hardly any enduring impact on their religious commitments. Accordingly, these efforts were abandoned beginning about 1980, and were transferred to Mexico, Central, and South America, where Mormon missionary success had already proved much more promising. The changing constructions of

“Lamanite” identity by Mormons throughout the late twentieth century is the subject in large part of Mauss (2003: chs 3–5), which also reviews most of the extant social science periodical literature on this period of Mormon-Indian relationships. In recognition of the *mestizo* heritage of most Latin Americans, Mormons have often extended the “Lamanite” label to all Spanish-speaking people in the hemisphere (Iber 2000).

*Book of Mormon Historicity*

Separately from, but obviously related to, the changing Mormon conceptions about “Lamanites” or Native Americans has been an ongoing controversy between Mormon apologists and various other scholars about the historicity of the Book of Mormon itself—that is, to what extent the Book of Mormon, as a product of revelation, can be considered a literal history of ancient American aboriginal peoples. Although this is not an issue of social science *per se*, it is worth considering here because it is likely to become an increasingly serious source of controversy between different ideological factions within the educated Mormon membership.

Starting in the middle of the twentieth century, Mormon anthropologists undertook to find archaeological evidence that could be dated to, and identified as, “Lamanite” in origin, but without notable success. Then later, in about 1980, Mormon archaeological studies were overshadowed when a younger and more sophisticated generation of apologists from various disciplines began a new two-pronged approach to defend the literal historicity of the Book of Mormon. The first prong, advocated by Mormon anthropologist John Sorensen (1985), was a new reading of the text that severely limited the putative location of the book’s “Lamanites” to a small section of Meso-America, occupied today mainly by Mayan descendants, rather than the entire hemisphere. The second prong, created by scholars at BYU’s Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), consists of an enormous literature, most of it in FARMS and BYU periodicals, identifying parallels between early Middle Eastern culture and literary usages, on the one hand, and the Book of Mormon text on the other (Mauss 2003: 142–46). Some of this periodical literature has been collected in book form. Reynolds (1982 and 1997) offers a good sampling of such articles.<sup>11</sup> A good sampling of critical responses to

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<sup>11</sup> This apologetic literature has won the grudging admiration of Protestant Evangelical critics of Mormonism (see, e.g., Mosser and Owen 1998).

the apologetic work at FARMS will be found in Metcalf (1993) and in Vogel and Metcalf (2002).

Then, early in the new century, Mormon and other scholars discovered that DNA analyses had been carried out on thousands of samples taken from aboriginal peoples throughout the hemisphere with virtually no biological evidence that any of them could have had Middle Eastern origins. It's not clear how systematic the sampling frame was for this DNA survey, but the results presented a difficult new challenge to FARMS and to other apologists among Mormon intellectuals. The significance of this DNA evidence for one disillusioned Mormon scientist has been presented in a recent book (Southerton 2004), and some of the work in Vogel and Metcalf (2002) also highlighted this challenge. Mormon apologists, for their part, are busy offering alternative assessments of the DNA evidence in the periodical literature and dismissing the DNA samples from outside Meso-America as irrelevant to the Book of Mormon. Church leaders themselves, who are not equipped to evaluate any of this evidence, pro or con, have wisely remained aloof from the controversy, directing attention instead to the spiritual and religious significance of the existence and message of the Book of Mormon.

#### *Uneasy Relationships with Intellectuals*

History is replete, of course, with struggles between the leaders of an institutionalized religion and its intellectuals, and O'Dea (1957) predicted continuing strain between the Mormons and "modern secular thought." Controversies over how to deal with the Book of Mormon, however, are by no means the only source of strain between Mormon intellectuals and the church leadership. A more general source of strain, as in other denominations, comes from the challenge that science continually presents to traditional religious beliefs. Having begun in the early nineteenth century, Mormonism has at least not been encumbered with the medieval science of Galileo's time, but it has still had to deal with developments since the middle of the nineteenth century, including scriptural higher criticism (Barlow 1991), genetics and biological evolution (Evenson and Jeffery 2005; Stephens et al. 2001), and the various social science theories from the social Darwinists through the postmodernists.

In general, the Mormon Church and its leaders have been able to accommodate modern science, or have even been quite progressive (Paul 1992; Sessions and Oberg 1992). Several Mormon apostles in the 1930s

and 1940s had advanced degrees in various fields of science, and Utah scientists were over-represented in *Who's Who* and in *American Men of Science* up into the 1970s (Mauss 1994; Wooton 1992). Much depends upon the personal views of those apostles and other leaders who happen to hold power and seniority during a given period of history, and since the 1960s these have tended to be men with conservative, even fundamentalist, views *vis-à-vis* evolution and certain other scientific theories. The strains with Mormon scientists have accordingly been greater than in the past, especially at BYU (Bergera and Priddis 1985; Waterman and Kagel 1998; Mauss 1994: 178–80).

### *Mormons and American Politics*

At the beginning of the twentieth century, most Mormon leaders were Republicans, primarily in reciprocation for Republican help getting statehood for Utah in 1896. The Mormon rank-and-file, however, remained predominantly Democratic into the 1960s. In presidential elections, however, Utah generally voted with the nation; that is, Utah's electoral votes almost always went to the winning presidential candidate (Mauss 1994). After the 1960s the Mormon electorate—and not only in Utah—took a decidedly conservative and Republican turn, as did the Mormon leadership and culture more generally, partly in reaction against the “Age of Aquarius.” Both the leaders and the general membership have remained quite conservative ever since the 1960s (Heaton et al. 2004). Utah is now about as Mormon and Republican as Rhode Island is Catholic and Democratic (to cite a polar opposite example). This development in Mormonism has created an ironic if tacit political partnership between Mormons and Evangelicals, who regard Mormonism as an outrageous heresy but who find themselves in political convergence with Mormons around a number of social issues (Mauss 1994). As this goes to press, Mitt Romney is a leading contender for the Republican nomination for the presidency of the United States, and it will be interesting to see whether and how his well-known commitment to Mormonism will affect that campaign, especially among Evangelical voters.

Quite a separate matter is the interventions by the Mormon leadership collectively into political controversies. These have historically been quite rare, except where crucial Mormon interests are perceived to be at stake, such as in the struggle over polygamy in the nineteenth century (Gordon 2002) and later in the campaign for Utah statehood and full

participation in the United States Congress (Firmage and Mangrum 1988; Flake 2004; Lyman 1986). Political interventions in the affairs of the state of Utah are to be expected, given the location of church headquarters and the numerical dominance of Mormons in the state (Sells 2005). Inasmuch as the state legislature, and even the governor's chair, are also predominantly under the control of Mormons, church interventions in the state need not be overt, since the preferences of Church leaders are pretty well known anyway. This situation is often resented by non-Mormon state residents, of course, as well as by less orthodox Mormons and by Mormon intellectuals, who tend to be more liberal politically (and in other ways) than the church leadership. Especially in recent years, such resentment has found expression in the exertions of the American Civil Liberties Union, often with some success (Sillitoe 1996; Smith 1994).

On the national scene, overt intervention in the name of the Church was rare—though certainly not unknown—until the middle of the twentieth century (Quinn 1983; 1997: Chapter 9; 2002). Certainly individual church leaders sometimes tried to influence political developments, but usually not officially or overtly. After midcentury, however, the culture of the Church underwent a process of moral and religious retrenchment, enforced by a new regime of administrative centralization and control (Mauss 1994). These changes were intended to help manage the rapid growth in church membership occurring in the second half of the century, but they were also in response to the fracturing which church leaders perceived in family relationships, as well as the erosion in traditional sexual and other norms associated with traditional family life (Corcoran 1994). Accordingly, since 1970, official Church intervention in national political issues (even if partly surreptitious) has become much more noticeable, and with some cost to the LDS public image (Bradley 2005; Ostling and Ostling 1999; Quinn 1997: Chapter 10; Sillitoe 1996).

### *International Mormonism*

Mormonism has been analyzed more than once as a quintessentially American religion (Bloom 1992; Shipps 2000), but it has had global aspirations from the beginning (Tullis 1978). Its first mission overseas was sent to England in 1837 with considerable success. By 1850 half of all Mormons had been born in the British Isles. Throughout the nineteenth century, Mormon missionaries established viable branches

of the Church throughout western Europe and Polynesia (Britsch 1986), as well as experimental “beachheads” in such unlikely places as Italy and India. Beginning early in the twentieth century, Mormons expanded into Latin America and Asia, though with little durable success in the latter region until after midcentury (Britsch 1998; Palmer 1970, 1978). Historians and social scientists have produced an enormous periodical literature on international Mormonism (much of it in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*) and have published books on the Mormon presence in such disparate locations as Canada (Card et al. 1990); Mexico (Shepherd and Shepherd 1998; Tullis 1987); Australia (Newton 1991); Japan (Brady 1979; Neilson 2006); England (Cuthbert 1987); Guatemala (Gooren 1998); Norway (Haslam 1984); Iceland (Woods 2005); Polynesia (Underwood 2000); Russia (Browning 1997); and Africa (Morrison 1990).

Some of these have devotional elements, but they are all written by respected scholars. Whether devotional or not, most literature on Mormons outside of the United States has not provided much analysis of the trials and tribulations of trying to export the religion to other cultures. For an exported religion, there is the constant dilemma of how to adapt itself to the new cultural setting while resisting unacceptable syncretism with deeply embedded local cultural and religious traditions. For the convert of the first or second generation, there is the loss of religious capital and various other costs (social, political, and economic)—much greater in some cultures than in others—of embracing an exotic new religion, such as Mormonism (Stark and Finke 2000). This dilemma, both for the LDS Church and for its converts, has not yet been systematically addressed in a book, but it constitutes the theme for much of the periodical literature, especially in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* during the past decade, such as in the collection by Mauss (1996).

### *Neglected Topics*

Elsewhere I have discussed briefly those topics that have been largely overlooked by social scientists studying Mormons, especially in book-length works (Mauss 2001: 175–80). These topics include the missionary enterprise, social stratification, organizational analyses, and deviant behavior (especially intra-community) *vs* the social control structures created to maintain conformity to the LDS beliefs and way of life. The conversions of millions of new members during recent decades,

even in the United States, have overwhelmed the traditional homogeneity of the Utah base and made social control much more difficult than what O'Dea observed in the 1950s. What seems to have resulted is official tolerance for a certain amount of *selective conformity* to traditional Mormon norms and beliefs, with different *normative constituencies* corresponding to the differential forms of conformity selected. These constituencies provide an ongoing source of change within Mormonism. One of them is the intellectuals, and another is the ultra-orthodox, but there are probably several others—to say nothing of the differential normative constituencies arising in cultures outside the United States. Studying these would tell us much about the residual potential for effective social control within the Mormon population, and therefore probably much also about the future of Mormonism.

### *Conclusion*

Perhaps this chapter has served at least to demonstrate that anyone who undertakes to teach a course on Mormons, at least in the United States, will face no shortage of scholarly literature on which to base such a course. Much of this literature is obviously historical in nature, rather than purely sociological or social-scientific. Yet the line between history and the social sciences is not always clear, especially when the history deals with the recent past or the contemporary scene. In fact, on the basis of all this literature there is a new subdiscipline of Mormon Studies already emerging. Courses in Mormon Studies are being taught in various universities, both public and private, and at least two important universities have established special academic programs in Mormon Studies, each based on an endowed chair: the Leonard J. Arrington Chair of Mormon History and Culture at Utah State University and the Howard W. Hunter Chair in Mormon Studies at the Claremont Graduate University in southern California. As this is being written, searches are underway to fill those chairs with senior scholars by the fall of 2007.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> More details on these endowed chairs and on the rise of Mormon Studies more generally can be found in Corman (2006) and Golden (2006).

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF AMERICAN CATHOLICISM: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

James C. Cavendish

More than fifty years ago, sociologist John Donovan (1954: 104), a member of what was then called the American Catholic Sociological Society, reflected on the sparse treatment of American Catholicism as a topic of research among sociologists of religion by commenting as follows on the narrow focus of extant research articles: "Their approach is problem centered and devoted to 3 areas: (1) Catholic immigrants and the practice of the faith... (2) the Catholic parish and parish problems... and (3) problems of external relations... [including] tensions with other groups." Considering the time of his writing, and the minority status of Catholics both in American society and in the American Sociological Society (wisely renamed the American Sociological Association in 1959, as the era of acronyms emerged), it is not surprising that most of the research up to that point was problem focused. Catholics were, at the time, relatively new immigrants to the United States; they were still struggling to assimilate into American society, and although they were less frequently victims of the kinds of overt anti-Catholicism that characterized the nineteenth century, they still faced a variety of stereotypes that portrayed them as being of lower social class, anti-intellectual, and lacking aspirations for upward mobility.

Much has changed since those early days of the sociological investigation of American Catholicism. No longer are Catholics outside of the mainstream of American society or the sociological establishment, and the sociological study of Catholicism in the United States has expanded to cover a variety of topics beyond those that initially concerned the early pioneers in the field. The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on these changes in the sociology of American Catholicism by: (1) tracing the development of the sociological investigation of American Catholicism through its formative years from the 1930s to the early 1960s; (2) summarizing the major issue areas that have occupied the attention of sociologists of American Catholicism since the 1960s, when significant

changes occurred in the Church and in American society; and (3) presenting what I regard as the most important and promising avenues of future research on the Catholic Church in America.

In order to make my presentation manageable, I have purposely limited my focus to research that has been conducted by social scientists, primarily sociologists of religion, who employ social science research methods to investigate issues central to the religious life of the Catholic Church in the United States. This excludes journalistic accounts and social commentaries about American Catholicism, as well as the scholarly literature in the fields of history, law, philosophy, education, and so on pertaining to this topic. It also excludes writings of sociologists of religion when those writings do not rely on social science methodologies (which, when considering Andrew Greeley's penchant for writing novels, narrows his writings considerably). I have also purposely omitted discussion of the extensive literature within other subfields of sociology that have examined issues peripheral to the central religious mission of the Church (e.g., the literature within sociology of education on the "Catholic school advantage," which examines the effect of Catholic schooling on academic achievement). My interest is really in the sociological investigation of the communal religious life of the Catholic Church in the United States, the social forces that have influenced that communal religious life, and the trends in the religious beliefs, values, practices, and identities of American Catholics. I begin by discussing the earliest pioneers in this field, the obstacles they faced in gaining legitimacy for the sociological study of American Catholicism, and how their research during the 1930s, '40s and '50s helped lay the foundation for the revival of the sociology of religion within the discipline of sociology during the 1960s.

*Pioneers of the Sociological Investigation of American Catholicism and the  
Obstacles They Faced: The 1930s to Early 1960s*

The earliest pioneers of the sociological study of American Catholicism were not always welcomed within the institutional spheres their lives and work bridged—the sociological establishment and the Catholic Church. Their lack of acceptance within the sociological establishment, it is fair to say, was largely due to their willingness to adopt a normative, Catholic approach to their research, despite the insistence of many leaders in the profession that all sociologists be value-neutral. Their lack of

acceptance within certain sectors of the Catholic Church, it is also fair to say, was largely due to their willingness to apply sociological theory and methods to understand ecclesial issues which, in the minds of some Church leaders, were not their right to investigate or discuss.

The tensions that sociologists of religion, including sociologists of American Catholicism, felt within the sociological community date to the 1930s. During that decade many sociologists of religion, especially those who professed a particular religious affiliation, perceived the climate within the sociological establishment as hostile and anti-religious. Morris (1998a) attributes this climate (or at least the perception of it) to sociologists' uncritical acceptance of the principle of value neutrality in the conduct of research. Because an increasing number of sociologists believed sociologists had to be value neutral in order to conduct "objective" research, any sociologists who either professed a specific set of religious beliefs or committed themselves to a particular religious institution were viewed with suspicion or scorn. During the 1937 meeting of the American Sociological Society, Morris (1998a: 14) reports, the climate grew so tense that a group of Catholic sociologists met to share their frustrations with the anti-religious environment and what they regarded as the "illogicality of value-neutral research." Recognizing their common grievances, they planned an organizational meeting the following year at Loyola University of Chicago, at which an even larger group of Catholic sociologists decided to establish the American Catholic Sociological Society (ACSS) and elected Jesuit priest Ralph Gallagher of Loyola to be its first president (Rosenfelder 1989). The ACSS soon began publishing the quarterly *American Catholic Sociological Review* (ACSR), which served as a publishing outlet for Catholic sociologists studying a broad range of topics in sociology. Although the articles in ACSR's early years represent a variety of research interests, a perusal of articles published during the 1950s reveals a special concern for the acceptance of Catholics within American society and within the discipline of sociology, as evidenced by the following titles: "Are Catholic Sociologists a Minority Group" (1953); "The Social Structure of American Catholics" (1955); "The Content of Protestant Tensions: Fears of Catholic Aims and Methods" (1957); "The Image of the American Catholic Sociologist" (1962); "Catholic, Scientist, and Sociologist: A Question of Identity" (1963).

Among the sociologists who led the campaign to legitimize their adoption of a Catholic perspective in the choice of research topics and conduct of research was ACSS member Paul Hanly Furfey (1896–1992),

a Catholic priest-scholar who spent the duration of his academic career, from 1922 until his retirement, at his alma mater, the Catholic University of America. Catholic University was the first Catholic university—and among the first of all American universities—to establish a department of sociology (1895),<sup>1</sup> and Furfey used it as a platform to advocate what he called a “Catholic sociology”—a sociology informed by a normative, Catholic perspective. He believed that social scientists can never be completely value-neutral because even their decisions to study some issues rather than others, or to define some issues as “social problems” and not others, involved making some type of value judgment. This belief in the illogicality of value neutrality led Furfey to argue that any sociologist who was also a Christian was bound to commit him/herself to the betterment of society, and he displayed this commitment in his own life by using his research on poverty, slavery, and war to decry these “social evils” on both sociological and moral grounds (Morris 1998c: 201).

By the middle of the twentieth century, a number of Catholic universities, motivated by the example set by the Catholic University of America and non-church related institutions, were creating separate departments for various disciplines, including sociology departments. These universities attracted to their faculties sociologists who were interested in applying new advances in sociological theory and methods to the study of the Catholic Church in the United States. Leading the way in such studies were three Harvard-trained sociologists (two priests and one religious sister)—Joseph Fichter, Joseph Fitzpatrick, and Marie Augusta Neal—whose pioneering work on Catholic parishes, priests, and members of religious communities helped lay the foundation for the sociological study of American Catholicism. Examining the life and contributions of these three pioneers illustrates the extent to which they sought to bridge their life and work as sociologists and pastors in a quest to understand and improve the communal religious life of Catholics in the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> The most important figure in the early department was William Kerby, a priest from Iowa who studied sociology in Berlin under Gustav Schmoller and Georg Simmel but wrote a dissertation in political and social science at Louvain (see Blasi 2005). Neither Kerby nor Furfey, nor Kerby’s student Raymond Murray, C.S.C., the earliest important figure in sociology at the University of Notre Dame (see Blasi 2002: 53ff.), engaged in the sociological study of Catholicism or of religion in general.

*Joseph H. Fichter, S.J. (1908–1994)*

A member of the New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus, Father Joseph Fichter completed his graduate studies in sociology in the Sorokin era at Harvard University, where he later returned to hold the Chauncey Stillman Professor of Catholic Studies from 1965–1970. Fichter spent his career, from 1947 until his retirement, as a sociologist on the faculty at Loyola University of New Orleans, although he also held various visiting professorships at Notre Dame, Tulane University, and the University of Chicago among others. In 1948 he undertook a thorough, year-long investigation of Mater Dolorosa Parish in New Orleans, a project he titled *Southern Parish*, and planned to publish the results in a four-volume series. The first work in the anticipated series, *Dynamics of a City Church: Southern Parish Volume 1*, was published in 1951, but soon after its publication, the pastor of the parish under investigation, angered by what he perceived as “slights and improprieties,” pressured Fichter’s Jesuit superiors into denying Fichter approval to publish the remaining volumes (Morris 1998b: 188).<sup>2</sup>

Fichter was pioneering not only in his willingness to publish results perceived by some to be unflattering to the Church, but also in his willingness to study topics considered in those days to be “hot-button” issues, especially among Catholics, such as race relations and interracial justice in the American South, patterns of segregation in Catholic parishes, schools, and facilities (Fichter 1954, 1960), and the transmission of “bourgeois” values in Catholic high schools and colleges (Fichter 1972). These research interests were coupled by his personal commitment to racial justice, as seen in his creation of an interracial group of college students to promote understanding between the races (despite the illegality of their meetings), his organizing of sit-ins in public facilities to protest segregation (long before the sit-ins of the late 1950s), and his work to develop young black leaders in New Orleans—including its first black mayor, Ernest Morial, who had been one of Fichter’s students (Byron 1994). Toward the end of his career, Fichter used survey data to study various issues related to the health and well-being of Catholic clergy, including their experiences of alcoholism and views about celibacy (Fichter 1987), and his interest in the family dynamics of married Catholic clergy (who had formerly served as ministers in

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<sup>2</sup> Three later works (1958a, 1958b, 1962) were replications of his New Orleans study, albeit in quite dissimilar settings—Germany, Chile, and South Bend, Indiana.

other denominations) led him to conduct a survey of their wives and children (Fichter 1992). Fichter was not afraid to use the results of that research as his basis for advocating for the ordination of married men and women to the Catholic priesthood.

*Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, S.J. (1913–1995)*

Like his colleague in the Society of Jesus, Father Joseph Fitzpatrick's sociological research was motivated by an interest in understanding the challenges faced by the Catholic Church in American society. He was particularly interested in the challenges faced by the Church in ministering to racially and ethnically diverse Catholic populations. According to James Kelly (personal communication; also see Kelly 1998a), after Fitzpatrick graduated from Harvard, he became the founding chair of the independent Department of Sociology at Fordham University. In his early years as a sociologist, Fitzpatrick (1959, 1966) used data gathered from Catholic parishes in New York City to study the patterns of adjustment among the Puerto Rican migrants to their new urban environment, and the role of parishes in promoting their integration into the city. Sharing the same concern about Catholic assimilation as many Catholic sociologists of religion at the time, Fitzpatrick (1981) took a particular interest in the cultural and social assimilation of first-, second-, and third-generation Hispanic Americans in the eastern United States. Toward this end, he studied trends in their upward mobility, including their attainment of higher education and proficiency in English, as well as their racial identification and rates of intermarriage. Just as Fichter reacted against the racism experienced by Blacks in New Orleans, Fitzpatrick (1987) similarly condemned the exploitation and discrimination experienced by Puerto Ricans in New York City and drew attention to their high levels of poverty.

Besides making several significant contributions to the sociological study of American Catholicism, Fitzpatrick was known in his early professional career to be a strong critic of the "anti-intellectualism" he perceived among Catholics, suggesting that he may have bought into some of the anti-intellectual stereotypes about Catholics circulating among academics at that time. In a 1954 article appearing in the *American Catholic Sociological Review*, titled "Catholics and the Scientific Knowledge of Society," Fitzpatrick (1954) wrote, "The great problem of the Catholic Church today is the lack of competent scholars, and of significant scholarship in the field of man's social relationships. The

Church cannot escape pressing social problems, but if she approaches them without adequate knowledge it is due to the failure of Catholic scholars.” If this critique had any legitimacy in the 1950s, it would not be long before Catholic sociologists would prove him wrong.

*Marie Augusta Neal (1921–2004)*

At the time when Joseph Fichter was conducting his studies of the Catholic priesthood, Sister Marie Augusta Neal, a member of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, was becoming a trail-blazer in the sociological study of women’s religious communities (Cousineau 1998). Like Fichter and Fitzpatrick before her, Marie Augusta Neal graduated from Harvard University and sought ways to apply her research skills to study trends in American Catholicism; her dissertation (published as Neal 1965) in fact focused on the priests of the Boston Archdiocese. She spent most of her career as a professor and chair of sociology at Emmanuel College in Boston, where she conducted surveys of women’s religious communities to uncover the factors that influence their willingness to adopt post-Vatican II structural changes in their religious communities. Her most important contribution in this area was her study of how women’s religious communities adapted to the changes mandated by the Second Vatican Council. Her research (Neal 1970) revealed that members of religious communities commonly defined their acceptance or rejection of structural changes in their communities in religious terms.

*The Advent of National Survey Research in the 1960s and Its Use to Track  
Patterns of Catholic Assimilation and Dispel Catholic Stereotypes*

Although the foundation for the sociological study of American Catholicism was laid by these pioneers whose early work focused on the Catholic parish and parish problems, on clergy and religious communities, and on the racial and ethnic diversity among Catholics in specific geographic regions, the sociological study of American Catholicism attained a higher level of respect during the revival of the sociology of religion within sociology in the 1960s. At this time, sociologists of religion began using national survey data and employing more sophisticated quantitative analyses to describe the characteristics of populations and test hypotheses. Among the Catholic scholars who helped stimulate this revival of the sociology of religion was Father Andrew M. Greeley, who

used national survey data gathered by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago to study the American Catholic population. If anyone's research would fill the void observed by Fitzpatrick a decade prior of "the lack of competent [Catholic] scholars, and of significant scholarship in the field of man's social relationships," it would surely be the research of Andrew Greeley.

A priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, Andrew Greeley completed his graduate studies in sociology at the University of Chicago in the early 1960s, and in 1965 began working full-time at the National Opinion Research Center (NORC). His approach to sociology, like that of other sociologists who were part of the subdiscipline's revival within sociology, was largely quantitative and based in the survey research tradition. John Simpson (1998: 216) writes that Greeley "eschews extensive theoretical abstraction and data-free discourse in favor of testable hypotheses...assessed in probability samples of population." Greeley's earliest work as a sociologist of religion was motivated by his concern with understanding how Catholics assimilated into American society across generations. This concern was manifested in two specific areas of inquiry—status attainment among American Catholics, and the religious and ethnic identities of the upwardly mobile descendants of Catholic immigrants. Greeley's interest in the first area of inquiry—status attainment among American Catholics—sprung from his reading of Gerhard Lenski's 1961 study, *The Religious Factor*, in which Lenski used data from the Detroit Area Survey to argue that Catholics as a group were deficient in economic, social, and academic achievement. In response to Lenski's report, Greeley (1963) used data gathered from a national survey of college graduates in 1961 and discovered that, contrary to Lenski's findings on the Detroit sample, Catholics did not differ from Protestants in their academic experiences, career aspirations, and desire for success. Greeley (1976, 1977, 1979) followed up this investigation by conducting cohort analyses using the large combined NORC General Social Survey file and found that by the mid-1970s Catholics exceeded Protestants on standard measures of family income, educational attainment, and occupational prestige, and that "these differences remain when the minority groups within the two denominations are removed—black Protestants and Hispanic Catholics—and when controls are introduced for region of the country and city size" (1979: 92). This led him to conclude:

The history of Catholics in the last half century...has been one of extraordinary economic and social progress—progress of the sort that the National Immigration Commission..., whose research led to the restrictive immigration laws, had confidently called impossible...Neither Catholicism nor Catholic education appears to be a barrier to achievement in American society; indeed, for both blacks and whites it seems to facilitate upward mobility (Greeley 1979: 94).<sup>3</sup>

Another area of inquiry in Greeley's early work was the religious and ethnic identities of the upwardly mobile descendants of Catholic immigrants to the United States. His study of an upper middle class parish in Chicago (Greeley 1962) and his analyses of patterns of intermarriage using the *Current Population Survey of the United States* (Greeley 1970), led Greeley to discover that Catholics, like Protestants of that time, exhibited stronger identifications with their religion than with their ethnicity—a finding evident in their higher rates of religious endogamy than ethnic endogamy.

Since the time of these early studies, Greeley has used survey research to debunk a variety of stereotypes about American Catholics, whether it be about Catholics' social class and levels of education, as in his early work, or about Catholics' attendance rates, their acceptance of the Church's moral authority, or their political attitudes. Commenting on Greeley's contribution to our understanding of American Catholics today, James Kelly (1998b: 433) states "Inspecting apostasy rates (between 14% and 20%), Mass attendance (more than 70% are likely to say at least twice a month), support for Catholic schools (high), acceptance of church leadership ("selective loyalty" whereby laity readily affirm core doctrines while...following...individual judgment on moral teachings), and satisfaction with local parish life (high), Greeley concludes that Catholics in America are "acculturated but not assimilated."

Clearly, the 1960s was a critical time for bringing the sociological study of religion into a more respected status within the discipline of sociology, and Andrew Greeley was a major figure in that revival.

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<sup>3</sup> Researchers have carried forward Greeley's interest the assimilation of Catholics into American society. Davidson et al. (1995), for instance, examined the religious affiliations of American elites between the 1930s and 1990s and found that although Catholics have been largely assimilated into American life, the rate of assimilation among elites is much slower. Davidson and his colleagues find that although Catholics represent an increasing proportion of society's leaders, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and members of the United Church of Christ continue to be disproportionately over-represented among elites. This leads him to conclude that America's Protestant establishment is still alive and well.

Because of the increasing legitimacy of sociology of religion within the discipline, and the diminishing need for Catholic sociologists to defend themselves and their research interests from what they perceived as a hostile climate in previous years, both the American Catholic Sociological Society and its journal the *American Catholic Sociological Review* underwent a metamorphosis. In the 1964, the *ACSR* was renamed *Sociological Analysis* and in 1970 the ACSS was renamed the Association for the Sociology of Religion. Sociologists studying American Catholicism had gained new legitimacy for their investigations, and the social and ecclesial changes of the 1960s and 1970s would raise a variety of new issues for them to explore.<sup>4</sup>

*Investigation of Specific Issues Related to the Vitality of American Catholicism  
in a Time of Social Change: 1960s to Present*

Since the 1960s, sociologists of American Catholicism appear to have been primarily interested in describing and explaining the social transformations happening within the Church as a result of the Second Vatican Council and the tremendous cultural shifts that swept the United States during the 1960s and '70s. No doubt, for many of these sociologists, their interest in the topic was fueled by their personal experiences with these changes, which have led some to describe the period, in retrospect, as a "Catholic revolution" (Greeley 2004). Among the areas of research explored by sociologists have been: trends in Catholics' beliefs, values, and practices in the decades following Vatican II; reasons for Catholic loyalty in the midst of strong dissent; young adult Catholics and how

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<sup>4</sup> Along with the increasing acceptance of sociological approaches to religion within the academic profession came a corresponding appreciation of sociology's contribution to understanding the pastoral concerns of the Catholic Church. In the aftermath of Vatican II's appeal for a more collaborative style of decision making within the Church, a number of centers for applied research and diocesan-sponsored research offices emerged across the United States to study trends in the Catholic Church on both the national and local levels. Among the non-academic centers for applied research on American Catholicism are the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), founded in Washington, D.C., in 1964, and the National Pastoral Life Center, founded in New York City in 1983. The first diocesan office of pastoral research opened in 1966 in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, and Kelly (1998b: 437) reports that by 1990 approximately half of all dioceses had such offices. The data archives established by these offices are vast, and include such things as census-derived diocesan and parish profiles, diocesan and parish program evaluations and needs assessments, studies of minority groups, and surveys of beliefs, values, and practices.

they have been influenced by post-modernity; clergy crises, personnel issues, and new parish ministers; and the transformation of religious orders, particularly women's religious communities.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the most thoroughly treated of these topics has been the trends in Catholics' beliefs, values, and practices over the last four decades.

*The Second Vatican Council, Humanae Vitae, and Changes in Catholics' Beliefs, Values, and Practices*

Much of the sociological research on American Catholicism since the 1960s has examined changes in Catholics' beliefs, values, and practices in response to the Second Vatican Council, the promulgation of the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, and the cultural changes that swept America during the 1960s and '70s. This interest is seen in the work of Andrew Greeley (1979, 1989, 2004), William V. D'Antonio and his colleagues (1989, 1996, 2001), James Davidson and his colleagues (1997), John Seidler and Katherine Meyer (1989), George Gallup and Jim Castelli (1987), and David Leege and Joseph Gremillion (1984; also see Gremillion and Leege, 1989) among others.

Based on his analysis of social surveys between 1940 and 1985, Greeley (1989) observed that although the religious behavior of Americans in general has remained fairly stable throughout the latter part of the twentieth century, there was an unprecedented decline in weekly church attendance and financial contributions of American Catholics between 1968 and 1975. Although some scholars speculated that the decline in these practices was likely due to the changes brought by the Second Vatican Council, Michael Hout and Andrew Greeley (1987) presented

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<sup>5</sup> Another area in which Catholicism changed in the aftermath of Vatican II was the rise of the Catholic Pentecostal or Charismatic Movement. In her research on this movement during the 1970s, Meredith McGuire (1974, 1977) found that its adherents, through a more emotional style of prayer, tended toward a form of escapism as a way of coping with the ambiguity and change in their lives caused by Vatican II and the cultural changes sweeping America at that time. She interpreted the various "gifts" that members might acquire—glossolalic prophecy, interpretation, confirmation, and discernment—as a type of stratification system within the movement that functioned as a way for members to fulfill a need for security and authority in their lives. Drawing on themes presented in McGuire's analysis, Greeley surmised that the Charismatic Movement was a response to the religious transitions and ambiguities within Catholicism in the aftermath of Vatican II. Catholics attracted to the Charismatic Movement, he stated, "are probably a segment of already devout Catholics seeking a more emotional religion than that of their parishes and striving to regain some of the certainties they lost in the post-conciliar church" (1979: 107).

evidence suggesting that the decline in attendance and contributions had less to do with the changes brought by Vatican II, which concluded in 1965, than with the 1968 publication of the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, which reiterated Catholic Church teaching against the use of artificial birth control. Using data that showed significant declines in American Catholics' acceptance of the Church's teachings on birth control and papal infallibility during that period, Hout and Greeley reasoned that the laity, at the time *Humanae Vitae* was published, ceased to value the Church's official moral judgments because it seemed so "out of touch" with the reality of their lives. The reaction among the laity was especially pronounced because the pope, in issuing the encyclical, rejected his own commission's recommendation to discontinue the Church's ban on birth control in light of new understandings about sexuality. Greeley and his colleagues reasoned that Catholics' rejection of the Church's moral authority on this issue is what led to the deterioration of Catholic devotion in terms of attendance and contributions at the tail end of the 1960s. Commenting on the trends in Catholic attitudes and practices during the 1970s, Greeley (1979: 98) concluded:

Between 1968 and 1978 American Catholics seem to have become more selective in their religious practices and behavior. They continue to identify with the church, but they take it much less seriously as a teaching authority; they continue to believe in the existence of God, life after death, and Catholic schools and are even more likely to receive communion now than they were ten years ago... Yet they reject the church's sexual ethic, and they are skeptical about papal authority.

Although Greeley was a forerunner in examining trends in Catholics' beliefs, values, and practices, arguably the most important scholarly contribution in this area in recent years has been the collaborative work of William D'Antonio, James Davidson, Dean Hoge, Ruth Wallace, and Katherine Meyer (1989, 1996, 2001). Using survey research to examine Catholics' beliefs and practices, they arrive at a number of conclusions that corroborate some of Greeley's earlier findings. In terms of beliefs, D'Antonio and his colleagues find that although many Catholics still think of themselves as Catholic and embrace that identity, they increasingly believe that the laypeople have responsibility for their own decisions when it comes to the use of artificial contraceptives, divorce and remarriage, sexual relations outside of marriage, abortion, and homosexual activity. As D'Antonio et al. (2001: 85–86) state, "a growing majority of Catholics look to their own conscience, rather than to the magisterium (i.e., the Catholic hierarchy), as the locus of moral

authority,” especially with “sexual issues that are more peripheral” to the core teachings of their religion. They also find that Catholics continue to “follow many core Church teachings” and “continue to believe in the importance of the sacraments and want them to be available on a regular basis,” even if this means expanding “the concept of priesthood to include women and, especially, married men” (2001: 128). In terms of Catholics’ practices, D’Antonio et al. find that weekly Mass attendance, reception of Holy Communion, traditional devotional practices, and private confession with a priest have all declined since the 1950s.

Commenting on the implications of these trends for understanding Catholic identity, they (2001: 50) state that:

... [C]reedal beliefs are much more important in defining a good Catholic than weekly churchgoing or obedience to Church rules about birth control, marriage, or divorce. Catholic laypeople distinguish between what they see as God’s law and Church law. The former is the valid criterion for who is a good Catholic... The latter are judged to be less crucial, less authoritative, and more open to question.

Another important contribution to understanding trends in Catholics’ beliefs, values, and practices has been the work of James Davidson and colleagues (1997) in what was known as the “Catholic Pluralism Project.” Although Davidson et al.’s research design is not longitudinal, they are able to make inferences about the impact of the Second Vatican Council by documenting the similarities and differences in Catholics’ beliefs and practices across three birth cohorts: pre-Vatican II Catholics, born before 1940; Vatican II Catholics, born between 1941 and 1960; and post-Vatican II Catholics, born after 1960. Using data from a national telephone poll and from focus groups and individual interviews conducted throughout the state of Indiana, they found significant differences across these cohorts of Catholics. While pre-Vatican II Catholics view the Church as an important “mediating force in their relationship with God,” post-Vatican II Catholics are the least committed to the institutional Church and more likely to express their faith in individualistic terms. Pre-Vatican II Catholics also adopt traditional approaches to faith and morals, as evident in the emphasis they place on “a Catholic identity, participation in the sacraments, and acceptance of Church teachings” (Davidson et al. 1997: 138). Vatican II and Post-Vatican II Catholics, on the other hand, are much less traditional in their faith and morals. Rather than defining what it means to be a “good Catholic” in terms of sacramental participation and adherence to Church teachings, they emphasize the importance

of being a “good person,” and of developing a personal relationship with God. They are also much more inclined to reject the Church’s teachings with respect to sexual and reproductive ethics.

Perhaps the single most comprehensive study of *registered parishioners’* beliefs, values, and practices in the decades after Vatican II was the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, which was a multi-phase study carried out between 1981 and 1988 (Leege and Gremillion 1984; Gremillion and Leege, 1989). The study is rightly regarded as a landmark because its multi-stage design, involving surveys of over 1,100 pastors and surveys of approximately 2,700 parishioners within 36 of those parishes, allowed the researchers to examine the effects on parishioners of being located within specific parish contexts (Leege and Welch 1989). The researchers examined a variety of topics, including parishioners’ involvement in the liturgy and various parish activities, but one of their central concerns was documenting the beliefs and attitudes of Catholic parishioners about the changes happening in the Church and society. Consistent with the findings of other sociologists, Gremillion and Leege (1989: 8) reported that “Parish-connected Catholics feel no great inconsistency in accepting the central mysteries of the Church while rejecting some of its leaders’ teachings of recent decades.”

Collectively, researchers who have investigated the beliefs, values, and practices of Catholic laity over the past few decades report two primary findings. First, the positions of the Catholic laity on issues commonly labeled “culture war issues” (i.e., abortion, reproduction, homosexuality) cannot be easily summarized by conventional labels such as “liberal” or “conservative.” They are far more complex than that. Even when many Catholics support some legalization of abortion, they continue to reject “abortion on demand.” Although the majority state that the pope is “infallible” when he teaches about the core beliefs of the faith, less than half say that this “infallibility” applies when he teaches about morals. And it is not uncommon, therefore, for survey researchers like D’Antonio et al. to find that Catholics can be conservative on a variety of moral issues yet liberal on a variety of social ones.

A second major conclusion reached by researchers who have studied trends in the beliefs, values, and practices of American Catholics is that despite the laity’s increasing disagreement with the Church hierarchy on issues of gender and sexual ethics, relatively few disaffiliate or disidentify with the Catholic Church. Greeley (1979) was among the first to report this, but this finding has been corroborated in the research of D’Antonio et al., and recent research has begun to provide explanations for why

Catholics might choose to remain Catholic despite their disagreement with certain doctrinal positions of the Catholic Church.

*Remaining Attached while Being Disobedient: Explanations for Catholics' Continued Loyalty Amid Doctrinal Disagreement*

In the past couple decades a number of researchers have begun to speculate about and test theories about why Catholics would continue to identify as Catholic when they disagree with some Church teachings, especially in the area of sexual ethics. For Andrew Greeley (2000: 16), the answer rests partly in what he calls the “Catholic imagination”—“the imaginative and narrative infrastructure of the Catholic heritage.” According to Greeley, religion is composed of root images, found and expressed in rituals and narratives, that enable individuals to share and reaffirm stories that provide meaning for their lives. Because the religion is more about experiences, symbols, rituals and stories than about doctrines, he argues that people embedded in a particular tradition are likely to cling to that tradition regardless of how far they may distance themselves from particular teachings of the hierarchy, especially on issues deemed to be peripheral to the core teachings of the faith (e.g., the Trinity, Incarnation, etc.).

Recent research by Michele Dillon (1999), Donileen Loseke and James Cavendish (2001), and Elaine Howard Ecklund (2005) appears to confirm Greeley’s (1979) and D’Antonio et al.’s (2001) observations about the continuity of Catholic identity amid pronounced disagreement with certain doctrines, and the explanations they offer for this phenomenon bear some resemblance to what Greeley talks about with respect to the “Catholic imagination” (also see Katzenstein 1998; Manning 1997). Dillon (1999: 244) suggests that many American Catholics, by embracing Vatican II’s definition of the Church as “the people of God,” perceive themselves as part of a movement within the Church to reinterpret “the tradition in ways that validate a more inclusive Catholicism.” Using an ethnographic approach to study three groups of “pro-change Catholics”—gay and lesbian Catholics who are members of “Dignity,” members of the Women’s Ordination Conference, and members of Catholics for a Free Choice—Dillon found that although these groups are “delegitimated in official church teaching and practices,” they are able to “reconstruct what it means for [them] . . . to be Catholic.” They do this by “embracing rather than denying the tension associated with belonging to seemingly incompatible

groups,” “grafting new ways of being onto old traditions,” and using “Catholic doctrine to argue for the legitimacy of their identities and the construction of an inclusive and participative church” (1999: 242–44). Similar conclusions are reached by Loseke and Cavendish who, in performing a document analysis of Dignity/USA newsletters, reveal that members of this gay and lesbian Catholic organization identify so strongly with their Catholic heritage that they cannot simply leave it behind. Instead, members skillfully use the rhetorical resources of their Catholic tradition to construct their identities as “dignified” members of the Catholic Church. Members write in the newsletter that “If our faith meant nothing to us, we would have just walked away . . . For many of us our faith and spiritual heritage cannot be simply left behind. Like our sexual orientation, our faith and spiritual heritage are integral parts of our lives” (quoted in Loseke and Cavendish 2001: 350–351). Similarly, Ecklund (2005) conducted interviews with three types of Catholic women—those who agree with Church doctrines, those who disagree with certain doctrines and leave the Church, and those who disagree but remain loyal—and found that those who disagreed with Church doctrines but remained committed Catholics saw their Catholic identity as personally negotiable. They chose to remain Catholic, Ecklund discovered, because of the sense of “meaning” they found in their local parishes and the opportunities they had to bring about changes in the Church “from within” the institution.

### *Young Adult Catholics*

Questions of Catholic identity are also central to the investigation of social scientists who have begun to explore the effect of late modernity on the young adult cohort. The work of Hoge et al. (2001) and of Fulton et al. (2000) shed light on contemporary culture’s influence on how young people live and maintain their Catholic identity in today’s world (also see McNamara 1991; Dinges et al. 1998). What they find is that the lives of young adult Catholics have been affected in profound ways by postmodern globalism, individualism, and free-market capitalism. More than any generation preceding them, young adult Catholics value free choice and experimentation in the religious context to the point that spirituality has become uncoupled from religion. They remain highly spiritual, these authors report, but they are less religious in terms of Mass attendance and personal devotions, less committed to the institutional Church, and more likely to embrace religious and moral

ideas that are incompatible with the Church's teachings, particularly in the areas of sexuality, lay involvement in the Church, and the role of women in society. Corroborating the findings of D'Antonio et al. (2001), Hoge et al. (2001) discover that, despite young Catholics' low levels of commitment to the institutional Church and its teachings with respect to sexuality and women's role in the Church, only a small percentage of young adults have left the Catholic community, and many value their parishes for their feeling of community and social life. Interestingly, too, Hoge et al. (2001) find that young Catholics attach importance to their faith only if they feel that it has been spiritually beneficial and relevant to their lives, thereby confirming that this generation is much less committed to the institutional church and much more in search of individual spiritual fulfillment.

*Clergy Crises, Personnel Issues, and New Parish Ministers*

While the changes in the Church and society over the last several decades have not had an appreciable effect on rates of disidentification among the Catholic laity, they have had a profound effect on the Church's ability to recruit and retain members to the priesthood and religious life. In their seminal study of the factors that lead priests to stay or leave the ministry, sociologists Richard Schoenherr and Andrew M. Greeley analyzed data gathered from a survey of over 3,000 priests and found that "the cost of celibacy was the principal consideration in the commitment sequence." Summarizing their findings, they stated: "If [the priest] sees marriage as a desirable opportunity foregone, if the costs of loneliness outweigh the satisfactions that flow from his job... and if movement is made easier by the fact of his being relatively young and inner-directed, the clergyman will probably decide to quit his position as a religious professional." (Schoenherr and Greeley 1974: 407; also see National Opinion Research Center 1972). Schoenherr and Lawrence Young (1993; also see Young 1998) have subsequently tracked the priest shortage in the United States since the Second Vatican Council and project that the number of Catholic priests in 2015 will have dropped to roughly half their level at the conclusion of Vatican II. When we factor in the growth of the Catholic population over the same time period, the drop is staggering, from a priest-to-member ratio of 1/726 in 1960 to 1/1,294 in 1997 (Hoge 1987; Christiano et al. 2002: 227).

Research by Dean Hoge and colleagues (Hoge et al. 1988, 1995) shows that although resignations from the priesthood may have been

a major reason for the decline in priests in the years immediately following Vatican II, resignations have slowed since then, leading them to conclude that the priest shortage is no longer a problem of retention (except among younger, more liberal clergy) but one of recruitment. Both Hoge (1987) and Stark and Finke (2000) locate the problem with recruitment in the hierarchy's unwillingness to change the rules about who qualifies for ordination, particularly its rules of clerical celibacy and the need to make a lifetime commitment. Stark and Finke (2000: 125) go further than Hoge, though, in arguing that these sacrifices (or "costs") of ordination are no longer offset by the kinds of rewards that religious life used to provide before Vatican II. Young Catholics, they state, are "far less likely to take up religious life because they recognized that vocations now entailed a negative cost/benefit ratio." Thus, it is not surprising that Schoenherr and Young, in proposing a solution to the priest shortage, state that "the ordination of married men and eventually of women would preserve the priesthood and along with it both the eucharistic tradition and the mechanisms of control over the central belief system and modes of worship" (1993: 354).<sup>6</sup>

In the absence of change in the Church's requirement that candidates for the priesthood be celibate males (and as of Fall, 2005, *heterosexual*, celibate males), the Church in the United States has responded by adopting a number of alternative solutions to the clergy shortage. One such solution has been to increase the number of permanent deacons and laymen and laywomen serving as parish ministers and parish directors (Wallace 1992, 2003). Murnion and DeLambo (1999) report that there are currently over 10,000 men in the restored order of the diaconate, and the number of lay parish ministers has increased from approximately 21,000 in 1992 to approximately 29,000 in 1997. Wallace (2003: 261) shows that an increasing number of these parish ministers are being asked to administer "priestless parishes" (from 24 in 1990 to 313 in 2000), and based on her interviews with members of these parishes, it appears that having married pastoral administrators, rather than celibate priests, enhances collaborate leadership and lay participation. Other solutions to the priest shortage have entailed

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<sup>6</sup> In a recent study of young adult Catholics, Hoge et al. (2001: 199, 201) find that only 27% of respondents indicated that priestly celibacy was "essential" to their "vision of what the Catholic faith is." Similar sentiments can be seen in the pronouncements of a group called CORPUS, which since its founding in 1974 has drawn together resigned priests and their wives to fight against mandatory celibacy.

importing priests from countries with priest-surpluses, like Nigeria, or having one priest, or a team of priests, pastor multiple parishes (Zech and Gautier 2004).

Unless or until the hierarchy of the Church broadens the criteria for who is admissible to ordained ministry, two trends seem likely to continue. One is the continued decline in the number of priests and an even more dramatic decline in the ratio of priests-to-parishioners. The other is an increasing conservatism among seminarians and the newly ordained (observed by Hoge et al. 1988 and Hoge et al. 1995), as it appears that only the most conservative candidates for ordained ministry seem willing to accept the current cost-benefit ratio accompanying the priestly vocation.

### *The Transformation of Religious Orders*

Just as the number of Catholic clergy declined after the Second Vatican Council, so too did the membership of Catholic religious orders, even as these orders attempted to renew themselves according to the mandates of the Council. Helen Rose Ebaugh (1993) and Patricia Wittberg (1994, 1996) offer different, though not incompatible, explanations for the decline of these religious communities. Ebaugh (1993) locates the decline of religious orders for women in the same type of cost-benefit analysis highlighted by Schoenherr and Greeley (1974) and Stark and Finke (2000) as an explanation for the decline in Catholic clergy. Using international data on the growth and decline of women's religious communities and the United Nations' data on economic opportunities for women in various societies, she found that religious orders experienced the greatest declines in societies with expanding economic opportunities for women. This led her to argue that religious orders serve as avenues of social mobility for women in societies with limited secular opportunities, which means that as secular opportunities for women in American society continue to increase, the number of new recruits to religious orders for women is likely to decline. Wittberg (1994), in contrast, employs a social movements perspective to examine the rise and decline of religious orders in the United States over the last two-hundred years and finds that one of the primary reasons for the current decline is the loss of the collective dimension of religious life caused by changes in the communal living patterns of their members. With so many religious men and women living outside of their religious communities (e.g., working in individual ministries and living

in apartments rather than convents or religious houses), it is difficult for these orders to maintain a sense of community and to encourage their members to live faithfully the charism of their founders. In some respects, the theories presented by these two researchers are not entirely incompatible. One could see that the decision to forego secular opportunities of social mobility to pursue life in a religious order may only be sustained over time when candidates and members have the support of a community to provide them with a plausibility structure to reinforce that decision.

*What Does the Future Hold for the Sociological Study  
of American Catholicism?*

As the amount of research discussed above attests, the sociology of American Catholicism, like the sociology of religion more generally, is in full bloom within the discipline of sociology, and its students no longer need to defend their interests or investigations from the attacks of those who might regard them as violating a value-free, or value-neutral, approach to sociology. The current legitimacy and stature enjoyed by the subdiscipline is evident not only in the appearance of scholarly articles in such prestigious journals as the *American Sociological Review*, the *American Journal of Sociology*, and the *Annual Review of Sociology*, but also in the increasing number of Catholic Studies programs and institutes at universities throughout the United States. While many of the authors of the research cited here may at one time or another have experienced the suspicions or anti-Catholic sentiments of colleagues in the profession, the quality of their research over the last few decades and the revival of the sociology of religion within the discipline have done much to solidify the status of the sociology of American Catholicism within the academy.

As my summary discussion attests, research on the sociology of American Catholicism has focused on a number of specific issue areas, most of which in the years following Vatican II illustrate the concern among Catholics, including the researchers themselves in many cases, in the changes brought to the Church by the Council. These issues include changes in the beliefs, values, and practices of Catholics; the reasons why Catholics remain loyal to the Church in the midst of their growing dissent from the hierarchy's positions in the areas of gender and

sexual and reproductive ethics; the identity of young adult Catholic in our post-modern times; and the decline in clergy and religious orders and its effects on the Catholic population.

In addition to solidifying the position of Catholic studies within the profession, this research also reveals a number of issues that call for additional investigation among students of American Catholicism. The most important and promising avenues of future research, in my opinion, are the following issue areas:

1. Unless or until the Catholic Church changes its requirements for ordination to the priesthood, the *priest shortage* will continue to have adverse effects on the Church in the United States at numerous levels. Its effect on priests will include an increase in their workloads and levels of stress (as documented by Hoge et al. 1995), as well as a redefinition of their pastoral responsibilities to consist primarily of sacramental ministry. Sociologists should continue to observe trends in these areas and investigate the effect of these trends on the attitudes and practices of clergy, parishioners, and potential candidates for the priesthood (see Schoenherr 2002). Of particular interest will be the effect of these trends on the cost-benefit calculations of prospective candidates for the priesthood, and on the laity's reactions to the more limited roles of ordained clergy, including the provision of lay-led communion services rather than Eucharistic liturgies. Zech and Gautier (2004) have already shown that there is a positive relationship between the number of priests on staff at a parish and its parishioners' levels of religiosity.
2. For various reasons, it appears that the younger and more theologically liberal candidates for the priesthood are the most difficult to recruit and retain (Schoenherr and Young 1990: 471–72; Hoge 1991, Hoge et al. 1995). Scholars have already speculated that this trend, and the increasingly conservative theologies of the newly ordained, will likely leave the Church with a class of priests who are mostly out of step with the people in the pews, which could, in turn, lead to more conflicts between the priests and laity within Catholic parishes. Although sociologists have conducted a number of surveys of religious congregations in recent years, Davidson and Fournier (2006) accurately observe that most of these surveys do not focus sufficiently on the perceptions and experiences of the laity. Future research will want to explore the extent of conflict between priests

and parishioners within Catholic parishes, especially in settings where the priest shortage makes it more difficult for priest personnel boards to select clergy suitable for each type of parish context.

3. Recent research shows that, due to the financial and human resource advantages that larger parishes have over smaller parishes, more and more dioceses are favoring the consolidation of smaller parishes and/or the establishment of new, larger parishes to help meet the needs of the growing Catholic population (McCallion and Maines 2003; Davidson and Fournier 2006). Despite this trend toward increasing the size of parishes, evidence shows that the younger generations of Catholics are the most likely to want smaller, more personal parishes (see D'Antonio et al. 2001:123), and Hoge et al. (1996) find that there is a negative relationship between the size of the parish and the rates of its members' donations. In light of these realities, sociologists should continue to track trends in the median and average sizes of Catholic parishes, and where possible, obtain measures of parishioners' levels of satisfaction and contributions in parishes of varying sizes. Ideally, this should be done using multi-level or contextual research designs similar to that employed in the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life (Leege and Welch 1989). If Church leaders are adopting practices that conflict with the desires of most post-Vatican II Catholics—who, not incidentally, make up the largest and growing proportion of lay Catholics—then this trend toward larger parishes could have severe negative consequences on the long-term viability of the communal religious life of American Catholics.

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## CHAPTER SIX

### BUDDHISM UNDER STUDY

Joseph B. Tamney

The study of Buddhism in the United States includes research about the increasing number of Buddhists and the increasing influence of Buddhism on American culture. The former topic, in turn, is divided into studies of non-Asian, primarily European, Americans and studies of Asian Americans.

Various national surveys suggest that the percentage of Americans who are Buddhists grew from about 0.1 percent in the 1970s to about 0.5 percent around the turn of the century (Smith 2002). Many more Americans are influenced by Buddhism than convert to this religion. National studies suggest that about 17 percent of Americans know a Buddhist, that nearly 30 percent are very or somewhat familiar with Buddhist teachings, that most of these people have favorable opinions about the religion, and that about 12 percent of Americans report being influenced by Buddhism (Wuthnow and Cadge 2004). Thus, sympathizers far exceed adherents (Tweed 1992: 42–43).

As a perusal of the reference section would make clear, almost all the relevant research has been done during the last fifteen years. During the 1970s, '80s, and early '90s, only occasional studies about Buddhist converts were published. Almost all of the considerable work about Asian-American Buddhists appeared after 1990.

#### *European-American Converts*

To begin, let us consider why European Americans have been attracted to Buddhism.

#### *Predisposing Factors*

There are two social conditions that make religious change of any kind more likely.

The first is the *openness of the religious market*. In the United States, the state exercises little control over religion, and thus the religious situation

is a competitive one, increasing opportunities for any religion that seeks to capture part of the religious market (Finke and Iannaccone 1993). It also seems true that public opinion has become more accepting of foreign religions. Louise H. Hunter (1951: 100–11) has documented the extent to which Hawaiians equated Americanization of Japanese immigrants with their Christianization during early modernity (1880–1950). Today Americans seem more open to religious diversity.

The second predisposing factor is *the number of structurally available people*. Using ideas from diffusion theory and the study of new religions, it can be anticipated that religious innovation is more probable among people who are both likely to learn about new ideas and free enough to experiment with them. Indicators of exposure include: being young, being educated, being more exposed to channels of communication such as the mass media, and living in urban areas. Indicators of opportunity to experiment include: being never married, having a higher social status, being mobile, and being without strong personal networks (Wuthnow 1978; Rogers 1983).<sup>1</sup> It can be assumed that all modern societies, and perhaps especially the United States, have a significant number of people in their populations who are structurally available in these ways.

Consistent with this theory, European Americans who either become Buddhist or are simply interested in Buddhism tend to be middle class, educated, and urban (Wuthnow 1976; Tipton 1982; Preston 1988; Gussner and Berkowitz 1988; Tamney 1992a: xvii; Tweed 1992: 42–45; Coleman 1999; Hammond and Machacek 1999: 53, 94, 145; Wuthnow and Cadge 2004). Moreover Hammond and Machacek (1999: 145) reported that when people converted to Soka Gakkai, they were “structurally available,” that is, they tended not to have full-time jobs, not to be married, and not to be living in the same geographical region as their parents and siblings. In addition, a large percentage of converts had traveled outside the United States (66 percent) or read about non-Western cultures (43 percent) prior to joining Soka Gakkai (1999: 153; see also Wuthnow and Cadge 2004).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The studies on which these predictions are based are noted in Tamney, Powell, and Johnson 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Soka Gakkai is a Japanese Buddhist group that was brought to this country in the 1950s. Over time, it has changed from a predominantly Japanese-American organization to a predominantly European-American one (Hammond and Machacek 1999: 36). Unlike other Buddhist groups, it emphasizes chanting for worldly benefits, such as a new home, health, career success, and better interpersonal relationships. By chanting,

Being structurally free would also include not being involved in strongly bounded religious groups. Thus Americans who report being influenced by Buddhism are more likely to be people with no religious preference (Wuthnow and Cadge 2004). Not surprisingly, converts tend to come from Catholicism, Judaism, and mainline Protestantism more than conservative Protestantism (Coleman 1999; Hammond and Machacek 1999: 44).

### *Supply-Side Factors*

Religious change is also dependent on the resources available to change-agents and on their strategies for bringing about religious change.

The first supply-side factor is the *mobilization of resources to effect change*. The history of Buddhism in America can be divided into three periods. During the years 1800–1880, intellectuals became seriously interested in knowing about Buddhism; the Transcendentalists led the way.<sup>3</sup> In the second, early modern, period (1880–1950), Buddhist institutions were created that were meant to attract converts among European Americans. During this period, European Americans joined a Pure Land Buddhist group in Hawaii (Hunter 1971: 154), and Japanese missionaries established formal centers to train European Americans in Los Angeles and New York City (Seager 1999: 267–68). Thomas A. Tweed estimated “that in each year at the peak of American interest (1893 to 1907) there were probably two or three thousand Euro-Americans who thought of themselves primarily or secondarily as Buddhists and tens of thousands more who had some sympathy for the tradition” (1992: 46). Over all, during this period Buddhism was weakly institutionalized; opportunities to practice Buddhism were available to only few Americans (Tweed 1992: 154, 159).

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a person becomes able to achieve whatever goals motivate the individual. As a member said: “One thing to understand about chanting is that it’s not really magic. It’s really a means to unlock subjective wisdom in your own life that you can use . . . your talents, your ability, your wisdom to solve a problem.” The most frequently cited benefit of chanting was psychological well-being or a sense of confidence (Hammond and Machacek 1999: 70–73). “The goal of Soka Gakkai Buddhism is to establish and maintain a state of enlightenment, which is achieved when people break their dependence on external circumstances for finding satisfaction and begin to take responsibility for their own state of being in the world” (p. 29). Unusually, Soka Gakkai has about the same percentage of members who are African American as there are African Americans in the general population (p. 44).

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the first period see Tweed 1992: 1–25; Tamney 1992a: 3–18.

The third period, 1950 to the present or late modernity, witnessed significant growth in Buddhist organizations, in Buddhist converts and sympathizers, and in Buddhist cultural influence. After World War II, some Japanese Buddhist monks became more interested in sending out missionaries both because Japanese Americans asked for them and because of the weakening role of Zen in Japanese society (Finney 1991: 393). Although not the intended effect, the relaxing of immigration restrictions in 1965 allowed more Asian religious specialists to migrate here, thus increasing religious competition. Similarly the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1956 eventuated in the migration of Tibetan missionaries to the United States. By 1997, there were supposedly over 1,000 meditation centers in the United States; in 1964, there were perhaps twenty (Seager 1999: 242).

The second supply factor is *reinvention*, in this case the “Americanization” of Buddhism. The diffusion of a religion requires that the new religion be shown to share some similarities with the new cultural environment and, at the same time, be able to solve some problems that the existing religions have failed to eliminate (Rogers 1983). To improve the fit between the new religion and the cultural environment, the religion is “reinvented,” that is, adapted to the environment. To facilitate the adjustment of Buddhism to the American context, its practitioners have been changing the form of the religion. In large part, reinvention is being done by European-American converts. But it is also the case that Buddhist monks have consciously adapted their religion to the American context as a way to attract European Americans. For instance: “Tibetan spiritual leaders during the 1970s began exploring what in their religion was universally valid, and what was merely ‘Himalayan dogma’ and which therefore could go.” Moreover they altered the traditional training program, beginning the process with training in meditation (Paine 2004: 15–16).

This process of adaptation has been labeled “Americanization,” “Protestantization,” and “Modernization.” Its traits are:

1. The organizations have become more democratic; this has meant that the laity has more power. The teaching style of the professional Buddhists, that is, those who dedicate themselves to practicing and preaching the religion, is becoming more participatory—including question-and-answer sessions, round-table discussions. Professional Buddhists tend to be laypeople, half of whom are women; they live in secular settings, often with partners (Wetzel 2002: 275–79).

2. Women have gained more power, and practices have become less masculine. One woman spoke of the “combat-boot mentality” prevailing at a Zen center where she practiced (Boucher 1988: 222). However the emphasis on the conquest of the mind is being softened by “the tenderness and earthiness of the feminine.” Feminist practice stresses “interdependence and healing rather than conquering or abandoning” (Kornfield 1988: xv). Feminist Buddhists are more interested in emotional self-exploration and in involving the body in the practice, for instance by using dancing as a way to meditate.
3. Practitioners are open to various forms of Buddhism. Buddhist traditions are being shared and mixed in the United States (Seager 1999; Numrich 1996: 55–56). “It is not at all uncommon for teachers from two different traditions to lead a retreat together or for a teacher to give a dharma talk that not only quotes other Buddhist traditions but Christians, Muslims, and contemporary psychologists as well” (Coleman 2001: 16).
4. Being a Buddhist is being defined in terms of both contemplation and social action, especially action regarding peace and ecological issues (Queen 2002). Socially engaged Buddhists seek to change directly institutional structures of society. The Buddhist notion of the interdependence of all things is used as a bridge to supporting movements to save animals, the environment, or other peoples.<sup>4</sup>

According to Tweed’s analysis of early modernity, Americans were reluctant to join a new religion unless it was compatible with the bedrocks of the culture of the period: commitments to self-reliance, optimism, and activism. Regarding self-reliance, Tweed claimed that Buddhism was as American as “robber barons and inventors, pioneers and cowboys.” Optimism means to emphasize the positive nature of human beings and a belief in progress. Activism means a concern to reform people and society, a willingness to engage in social action. While defenders of Buddhism during early modernity tried to portray Buddhism as optimistic and activist, Buddhism was often perceived as fostering pessimism and passivity, which limited its appeal (1992: xxiv, 130–32). American Buddhism today is clearly more activist. I shall return to the issue of pessimism.

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<sup>4</sup> Relevant organizations include The Buddhist Peace Fellowship Zen Peacemaker Order.

The third supply-side variable may be termed *the Buddhist handicap*. Specifically it means that some Buddhists lack a sense of urgency about converting people, especially those who believe in rebirth and that the quality of the new life is determined by the law of karma. “The karma-rebirth orientation means that everyone has endless time to reach nirvana and that people can accept Buddhism only when their karma is good” (Tamney and Chiang 2002: 181). Some Asian Buddhists in America have such attitudes. A monk explained that the acceptance of Buddhism is “a matter of karma and of the spiritual maturity of sentient beings. If they are not ready ‘to become the vessels of the Dharma,’ it is useless to try to impose anything on them” (Nguyen and Barber 1998: 142). Fenggang Yang commented as follows about people attending a Chinese Buddhist temple: “Regarding religious practice and belief, these parents frequently say that depends on each child’s karma” (2002: 85). However it is not known how widespread such attitudes are among Buddhists in America.

There is suggestive evidence that Asian-American Buddhists are unusually open to Christianity. Penny Van Esterik (1992: 50) reported that many Buddhist Lao refugees “attend Buddhist merit-making services on Saturday and Christian services on Sunday.” Thomas L. Douglas reported that the Cambodian-American immigrants whom he studied perceived Buddhism and Christianity as complementary, and that they mixed Buddhist and Christian practices. The Cambodian monks told Douglas that both Buddhism and Christianity had good elements. They believed that there are many roads to salvation—although one Cambodian monk added that Buddhism was the “express route” (Douglas 2005: 123–24, 137). Such attitudes would lessen any sense of urgency about proselytizing, but again it is not known how widespread these attitudes are.

The fourth supply-side factor is, ironically, the *demand for Buddhism*: Why did European Americans want to learn about Buddhism, or in some cases, join Buddhist groups.

During the period from 1880 to 1950, the United States became an urbanized and industrialized society. The early part of this period was the age of the “robber barons.” Corporations, and the society they dominated, were organized to maximize profit, period. At the same time, there was a “spiritual crisis” among Christians as a result of evolutionary science, biblical criticism, and an increased awareness of the cultures and religions outside the West (Tamney 1992a; Tweed 1992: 92–93).

*Anti-modernism* was a factor. Modernity was associated with physical ugliness and moral ugliness—dirty streets and dirty people, the work ethic and greed. Some responded by seeking to escape modernity; they sought inner peace, a stress-free life. The interest in Buddhism was linked to unease with the newly modern American society. To some extent, the interest reflected an aristocratic disdain for the emerging urban, industrial society. Books and magazines advised Americans to avoid the “rat-race,” such as by learning from Oriental people. In the early years of the twentieth century, “the east was portrayed as a peaceful, fairy-tale land, and Buddhism, it was hoped, was a means of attaining the inner peacefulness associated with the East” (Tamney 1992a: 21; Lears 1981).

Another response was the romantic—a mistrust of the modern emphasis on reason and science. Many artists during the period were interested in Buddhism (as well as other Eastern religions and Native American religion). They sought to capture a reality beyond, beneath, the observable reality—the spiritual aspect of everyday reality.<sup>5</sup> “These artists were interested in the unseen—in the invisible level of reality at which all is one—as well as in the unknown, intriguing depths of our inner life. They wanted to experience, express, lead us to the underlying oneness and to the higher (deeper) states of consciousness” (Tamney 1992a: 25).<sup>6</sup>

Some saw Buddhism as modern. This third response to early modernization valued Buddhism because it seemed so modern in comparison with Christianity.<sup>7</sup> Buddhism supposedly depended on the use of reason, not on the guidance of authority figures or authoritarian institutions. It was perceived as more compatible with science. In general, those attracted to Buddhism were people ready to give up traditional ideas about a personal creator God and an immortal, personal soul; such ideas were seen as unscientific (Tweed 1992: 125–27). Converts rebelled against both the authoritarian nature of some Christian churches and the general emphasis on the need to believe certain supposedly irrational Christian doctrines.

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<sup>5</sup> Tweed defined “romantics” as people who were attracted to Buddhist culture as a whole—“its art, architecture, music, drama, customs, language, and literature as well as its religion” (1992: 69).

<sup>6</sup> Ian Harris (2002) gives a brief overview of the influence of Buddhism on American artists during the twentieth century.

<sup>7</sup> Tweed (1992) called such people the “rationalists.”

Moreover, Buddhism was perceived as more compatible with the various world religions that Americans were increasingly learning about; Buddhism seemed to struggle against other religions far less than Christianity (Tweed 1992: 98, 103–04; Tamney 1992a: 35–37). “Many Buddhist sympathizers felt that the intellectual difficulties that accompanied exclusivist positions were insurmountable. And the loss of solid theoretical grounds for absolutizing any particular religion made Christianity’s reputed history of persecution and coercion seem even more reprehensible” (Tweed 1992: 98).

With modernization from the 1950s to the present, a new national character emerged. Child rearing changed, especially for the middle class; children were encouraged to express their desires and emotions, and generally there was freer expression of feelings in the home (Tamney 1992a: 47). The ideas of Freud and his followers became widely known. In addition, the human growth movement appeared, which shifted the emphasis from minimizing the effects of repression to the goal of self-actualization (Tamney 1992a: 120). The famous therapist, Carl Rogers, (1956: 156) wrote that many clients were interested in the same thing: “Who am I, really? How can I get in touch with this real self, underlying all my surface behavior? How can I become myself?” The therapist, Karen Horney, (1950) argued that modern people tended to think and feel only what they were told that they should think and feel. The “tyranny of the should,” she said, prevents people from understanding how they do feel and think. Thus the newly affluent Americans were interested in discovering and developing who they were.

Moreover there was dissatisfaction with the newly dominant middle-class lifestyle. People in this class were sometimes perceived as mindless conformists leading boring lives and as preoccupied with material consumption. The goal of the critics was to find the authentic person behind the social roles and acts of sheer conformity that defined people. At the same time, Americans became increasingly skeptical of words and increasingly interested in personally experiencing reality. Alan Watts, a Buddhist sympathizer and popularizer, wrote that Western religions have limited knowledge to what can be expressed in words; in contrast, Eastern rituals help people to “become free from the hypnotic tyranny of words and concepts and return to reality” (1970: 301–2).

European-American Buddhist converts tend to be politically liberal (Coleman 1999; Preston 1988: 20, 148; and Rothberg 1998). During 1996–97, a questionnaire, which included items from previous national polls, was mailed to a random sample of people who subscribed to Soka

Gakkai publications; the following description is based on the 37 percent of the sample who returned the questionnaire and who were members of Soka Gakkai. Compared to the general population, members were politically liberal (51 percent versus 27 percent). Consistent with this finding, members held more liberal attitudes about gender roles, homosexuality, and the cause of poverty (Hammond and Machacek 1999: 119–21, 125–26). Using a scale developed by Ronald Inglehart (1988), Soka Gakkai members were found to be more likely to hold “postmaterialist” values—“choosing self-expression and freedom over economic and physical security at nearly three times the rate of the public at large” (Hammond and Machacek 1999: 114–17).<sup>8</sup>

Thus Americans who were more open to social change and who were more interested in self-actualization were drawn to Buddhism, and especially to meditation.<sup>9</sup> Meditation is an important theme in American Buddhism.<sup>10</sup> Unlike Asian-American Buddhists, who are interested in merit making, European Americans tend to be interested in meditation (Seager 1999: 137). James William Coleman (1999) studied converts to seven European-American Buddhist groups. The typical respondent meditated almost daily; the median time was 35 minutes per sitting, most of which was done at home. About nine times a month, the converts attended a Buddhist service. They averaged one meditation retreat a year. Why has meditation been so attractive?

In 1959, I interviewed several people who practiced at the First Zen Institute in New York City. Two of them used meditation as a kind of therapy. They were not trying to escape modern society but their own feelings of personal rejection and insecurity (Tamney 1992a: 53). “Most [European American] Buddhist teachers in the West spend a great deal of their time dealing with such psychological issues as anger management, fear, guilt, and, strategies for coping with the instability

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<sup>8</sup> In a random sample of Houston residents, the Asians were less politically conservative than the others (Klineberg 2004: 258). However in a study of Asians living in five major metropolitan areas, respondents who identified themselves as Buddhists were similar to the whole sample in being slightly more liberal than conservative, with most of them claiming to be middle-of-the-road (Lien 2004: 271).

<sup>9</sup> During late modernity many Buddhist communal organizations were created. Harvey Cox (1977) argued that Americans joined Buddhist groups because they felt lonely and sought feelings of community. However others have suggested that such a motive has not been the dominant reason for converts to Buddhism (Gussner and Berkowitz 1988; Tamney 1992a: 72–73; Coleman 2001: 21).

<sup>10</sup> For a description of meditation practice see Tipton 1982: 95–103; Preston 1988.

of life” (Coleman 2001: 212). According to a Pure Land priest who is also a psychotherapist, whereas Japanese-American Buddhists are not interested in psychotherapy, European-American Buddhists regard a temple as “a kind of therapy center” (Imamura 1998: 229). Thus some Americans have been drawn to meditation to improve their mental health. Appropriately Zen practitioners reported that meditation resulted in less anxiety, feeling more relaxed, and a gradually increasing ability to concentrate better (Preston 1981).

Others whom I interviewed were searching for spiritual insight and were drawn to the Institute because meditation gave them a path to follow without requiring that they accept any doctrine about what they will find at the end of the path (Tamney 1992a: 59). For such Americans, Buddhism is a minimalist form of religion. It gives spiritual seekers a plan of action without requiring creedal conformity.

Steven M. Tipton argued that converts to Zen Buddhism wanted a morality that flowed from experience—an ethic “of spontaneous, direct self-expression and situational responsiveness” (1982: 109). One respondent told Tipton: “I used to go through the whole ‘I should, I should’ routine. The tyranny of the ‘should’” (1982: 137). In contrast, meditators claimed that their practice produced a state of pure awareness that results in feelings of love and compassion for all people and things of this world. This state involves being nonattached to self or anything else; thus a person “is free to experience the situation as it is and respond in a way that is both honestly self-expressive and truly compassionate” (1982: 113, 116–18). These meditators were not interested in the basic five precepts of Buddhism [refrain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxicants]; they hoped to achieve higher states of awareness within which what is right action would be obvious. Enlightenment is the experience of the interconnectedness of all things; thus a wise person knows that hurting another is hurting the self; a wise person experiences the hurt of another as self-hurt. For the enlightened, compassion is natural (Fronsdal 2002: 298).

During early modernity, then, Buddhism appealed to people who wanted to detach themselves psychologically from the tension, anxiety, and ugliness of early modernity. Others, however, found Buddhism to be more rational than Christianity and thus more compatible with modernity. Similarly, today, people like Buddhism because it offers a way to grow spiritually without requiring commitment to specific beliefs about the nature of the spiritual. Yet others, the romantics, were attracted by the mystical presentation of Buddhism. During late

modernity, Buddhism prospered because of the popularity of meditation. This practice became identified with mental health, personal growth, and an experientially based ethic.<sup>11</sup> Clearly Buddhism lost its reputation for being pessimistic about human nature and the human condition (Tweed 1992).

A final supply-side factor is the *rising generation*: specifically, Buddhists are not doing well when it comes to keeping their children within the fold. According to the 1991 UCLA survey of college freshmen in the United States, only 50 percent of the students with Buddhist mothers identified themselves as Buddhist; in comparison, the figures for Catholics, Methodists, and Jews were 93 percent, 88 percent, and 83 percent respectively (Kosmin and Lachman 1993: 269).

Buddhist leaders are trying to accommodate an aversion to a monastic lifestyle among Americans. For example, Zen Mountain Monastery has established three tracks for study and practice: “secular, for those who sought to cultivate awakened consciousness with no religious overtones; lay Buddhist, for householding practitioners; and rigorously monastic, in the spirit of the Chan and Zen traditions of China and Japan” (Seager 1999: 102; cf. Paine 2004: 98). The second type mixes monastic practice and a lay lifestyle (Seager 1999: 150); meditation is learned during retreats rather than by living a monastic life (Wallace 2002: 41). However there is concern that householding practitioners cannot achieve enlightenment. It is difficult to be a parent and maintain one’s practice (Coleman 2001: 147–49). As a European-American Buddhist leader said: “I wonder whether we, as a generation of practitioners, are practicing in a way that will produce the kind of real masters that have been produced in Asia” (Seager 1999: 151). Cadge (2005) found that among European-American Buddhists, some thought of themselves as Buddhists, others as simply meditators, others as followers of one or more religions—such as Christian and Buddhist or paganism and Buddhism, and yet others claimed no religious identity. The lack of appeal of a monastic life and the varied identities of practitioners raise questions about the potential for Buddhist growth among European Americans.

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<sup>11</sup> The interest in an experientially based ethic was an important part of the human potential movement (Tamney 1992b: 96–97).

*Asian-American Buddhists*

The earliest Asians to arrive in significant numbers were the Chinese and Japanese in the nineteenth century. At the time, only the Japanese sent missionaries (Tweed 1992: 35–37). Asian-American Buddhist temples began to appear in significant numbers during the 1960s (Seager 1999: 137). Especially since the 1970s, many Mahayana Buddhists have migrated to the United States from China and Vietnam, and many Theravada Buddhists have come from Cambodia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka. It is estimated that one-half to two-thirds of American Buddhists are Asian Americans (Seager 2002: 114). Scholars interested in Asian-American Buddhism have discussed what functions the religious organizations serve and how these organizations are changing.

*Preservation and Change*

First and foremost, Asian-American Buddhist groups serve their participants by preserving their cultures (see, e.g., Numrich 1996; Lin 1999; Huynh 2000; Zhou, Bankston, and Kim 2002). In the temples, migrants use their native language, eat the food of their homeland, and train their young in the ways of their cultural heritage. In addition, the organizations help Asian migrants adjust to their new society. For instance, based on his study of religious organizations in New York's Chinatown, Kenneth J. Guest claimed that regardless of their religious identity, these organizations helped migrants adjust to their new home by reconnecting them to social networks based on kinship or ethnic or religious ties, by providing information about jobs, housing, health care, and the like, and by giving access to financial resources.

Moreover these religious groups provide instant companionship and support for self-esteem. As Guest wrote: "Unlike many other social and cultural institutions, religion provides the basis for immediate and often profound acceptance within a community of people who previously may have been strangers" (2003: 198). Concerning the illegal immigrants of Chinatown, he wrote:

Outside [the temples] they are sinners, lawbreakers, one step away from imprisonment and deportation, the truncation of their dreams of freedom, liberation, and financial success; inside they are exhorted to remember that while a green card may be nice, only God's green card will get them into heaven. (Guest 2003: 172)

To varying degrees, other Asian-American temples provide the services described by Guest.

Asian Americans emphasize devotional practices and merit making (Seager 1999: 138; Padgett 2002: 209; Chandler 1998; Lavine 1998; Nguyen and Barber 1998). Lay people hope to gain rebirth in a favorable status for themselves or ancestors by practicing merit making. Wendy Cadge (2005) compared an immigrant Thai-American Theravada group with a European-American one. Both are non-residential lay centers with middle- and upper-class participants. At the immigrants' temple, the monks discourage magical activities such as fortune telling. The main activity is merit making by donating food, time, or money to the temple. The temple is hierarchically organized; however the resident monks are more dependent on the laity than is the case in Thailand. Entire families attend temple events together. The European-American center is a lay-led group, whose main activity is meditation. Whereas the Thai Americans seek a better life in the next rebirth, the European Americans seek enlightenment in this life. Many European Americans are single; social life is based on small sub-groups rather than communal rituals that involve the whole group, as is the case at the immigrants' temple.

Cadge's comparison of the attitudes toward morality bring to mind Tipton's discussion of European-Americans' understanding of the relation between meditation and morality:

While practitioners at Wat Phila [the immigrants' temple] see in Buddhism clear moral guidelines [the five fundamental precepts of Buddhism—refrain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxicants], practitioners at CIMC say that Buddhism, and the practice of meditation specifically, leads them to discover their *own* understanding of right and wrong experientially (2005: 113).

Numrich (1996: 19–39) detailed schisms within two Theravada groups that illustrate the “Americanization” of Asian-American temples. The more Americanized groups favored more power for the laity, the elimination of palm-reading by the monks as well as of god-worship at shrines within the temples, a greater divorcing of Asian cultural practices and Buddhism, and more emphasis on meditation. These differences were similar to the differences between the Asian-American temples and the congregations of European-American converts that practiced in these same temples; among the European-American converts, meditation was by far the most important religious practice; in contrast, the Asian

immigrants ranked ways of earning merit—acts of charity, donations to monks—as more important than meditation (Numrich 1996: 73–74; cf. *Perreira 2004*).

Monks in ethnic temples have less power than their counterparts in their countries of origin—this has reported for Cambodian, Chinese, Laotian, and Japanese groups (*Seager 1999: 63; Huynh 2000; Bankston and Zhou 2000: 465–66; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Douglas 2005*). However in some temples, the monks remain clearly in control (*Huynh 2000; Padgett 2002*). *Zhou, Bankston, and Kim (2002)* found that a Cambodian temple was run by the monks and speculated that this was a result of the laity being poor and uneducated. However this explanation cannot explain the power of monks in a Chinese temple in Houston; although in this case, the laity is exercising some leadership (*Yang 2000*).

In their home countries, the Mahayanist Buddhists from Chinese societies tended to practice a folk religion that included Buddhist elements. Unlike the South Asians, the Chinese do not identify their culture with Buddhism—“Chinese identity has not included a specific religion; rather the Chinese identify with a culture, part of which has been called Confucianism, part of which is Buddhist or Daoist, and part of which is a vaguely defined folk religion” (*Tamney 1996: 40*). As *Yang (2002: 85)* pointed out:

Many Buddhist immigrant parents, whom I interviewed in Houston, do not insist on their children becoming Buddhist practitioners...[M]any parents place moral and cultural education above religious education. They bring their children to the temple to learn Chinese language, moral values, and behavioral proprieties.

At least among the Chinese, culture is more identified with a moral code than with a religion. Research is needed to determine whether this attitude also exists among other East Asian peoples.

Studies have reported that Chinese immigrants know little about Buddhism when they arrive in the United States (*Chandler 1998: 24; Huynh 2000: 48*). In a random sample of Asians living in Houston, those from mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong stood out because of the percentage claiming no religious affiliation—39 percent (*Klineberg 2004: 253*).<sup>12</sup> A study of Chinese Americans in southern

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<sup>12</sup> A study of Korean immigrants in the Chicago area found that half were Christians when they came to the United States; only 14.2 percent identified themselves as Buddhists (*Hurh and Kim 1990*).

California found that 44 percent claimed no religious identity; 32 percent were Christians, and 20 percent were Buddhists (Yang 2002: 71). In one American Chinese Buddhist temple, whose members came from Taiwan, many said that they became “practicing Buddhists” only after immigration (Chen 2002: 223).

Chinese-American temples tend to practice reformed Buddhism. They are eclectic—borrowing from different forms of Buddhism—and ecumenical (Yang 2002: 83). The more-educated Chinese immigrants have shown some interest in practicing meditation, and their organizations tend to be lay-led (Chandler 1998: 18–19).

Hsi Lai Temple, which is in Southern California, is linked to a middle-class Taiwanese group, Buddha’s Light Mountain. The Taiwanese organization seeks to reform (or modernize) Buddhist practice, and this is reflected in the activities of the American temple. The temple includes a monastery for monks and nuns as well as a lay organization that engages in outreach work. The temple has a library and offers classes in Buddhism in Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. The temple serves as a community center; it has classes in Chinese language and culture (art, cooking, folk dancing), and American laws and customs; the temple also helps immigrants find jobs. The temple engages in activities to protect the environment; it runs soup kitchens for the homeless and provides childcare and elderly care. The goal is to create the Pure Land here on earth. The leaders want to transform images of Buddhism: “From ‘passivity to activity,’ from ‘aversion to the world to engagement in the society and love of existence,’ and from the practice of asceticism to practice in a quiet, wealthy, and comfortable environment” (Lin 1999: 149–50).<sup>13</sup>

The Hsi-Nan Chinese Buddhist Temple in Houston is another temple that has ties to Taiwan and that reflects the reform movement among Buddhists in that country. Interestingly the temple has both a Chinese-language service and an English-language one. The former service has a much larger attendance. Compared to the English service, more of the Chinese one is devoted to chanting and sutra reading, while the focus of the English service is more on meditation and discussion of Buddhism. Young Chinese and European Americans tend to be the audience for the English service (Yang 2000: 70–73).

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<sup>13</sup> The quotations are from Temple material. Carolyn Chen (2002) described another socially engaged Chinese Buddhist temple with roots in Taiwan.

*The Future of Asian-American Buddhism*

The oldest institutional form of Buddhism in the United States is the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA), which dates back to 1899; it is a form of Pure Land Buddhism; most of its members are Japanese Americans.<sup>14</sup> We might consider its history as a possible model for all Asian-American groups. In order not to stand out, early in its history the BCA adopted terminology—words like “church” and “reverend”—and architecture from their Christian neighbors. They emphasized communal Sunday worship and set up Sunday schools (Yoo 2002). Unlike temples in Japan, BCA churches in the United States became centers for social life; they have provided continuity with Japanese culture and Japanese-language classes; in addition, the churches have organized dances and shown movies (Seager 1999: 52–55). Second-generation Japanese were less interested in Japanese language and culture, but supposedly the third generation is showing more interest in such matters (Seager 1999: 63; cf. Tanaka 1999).

However, the Buddhist Churches of America is in decline. One-half of their priests are missionaries from Japan (Tanaka 1999). Similarly the Buddhist Churches in Canada is dependent on monks from Japan; such monks are not happy serving Canadian congregations because this requires knowing English and because monks have less status in the lay-controlled BCC congregations than at temples in their homeland (Mullins 1988). Mark Mullins questioned the long-term viability of these congregations because of the high rate of intermarriage for Japanese Canadians, which affects their commitment to Japanese culture and to Buddhism. The out-marriage rate for Japanese Americans is 25.6 percent (Jeung 2002: 220).

Such problems affect other Asian-American groups. Almost all the monks at Theravada temples are imported (Numrich 1998: 150), and several of the Chinese temples described earlier had monks from Taiwan. There is less reason for Asian Americans to become monks compared to the people in their countries of origin. For example: “If Thai Buddhism has traditionally provided an avenue of education and social mobility for underprivileged men, what could it possibly offer the off-spring of highly driven, educated, and successful [Thai]

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<sup>14</sup> Seager (2002: 106) refers to pre-1940s Japanese and Chinese groups as “old-line Asian-American ethnic groups.”

couples working in the Silicon Valley? Precious little, it would seem” (Perreira 2004: 331). Intermarriage is similarly affecting religious commitment among people other than Japanese Americans. Todd LeRoy Perreira studied a Thai-American temple in which many members were involved in interethnic marriages; some of the couples participated in both Buddhist and Christian activities; the Thais in these marriages had more traditional attitudes about Buddhism than did their spouses who were also involved in the temple. Cadge (2005) discussed the effect of experiences such as intermarriage on identity. Many of the immigrants whom she studied were raised Buddhists, but because of such experiences as exposure to other religions or ethnic intermarriage, they examined their religious beliefs and practices and consciously chose to be Buddhists; in Cadge’s terms, they went from having an ascribed Buddhist identity to having an achieved identity; such people tended to separate Buddhism and Thai culture.

At the same time, Asian monks in the United States are rethinking what it means to practice Buddhism. In the course of adapting to the American context, a distinction is being made between “ethnic Buddhism” and “pure” Buddhism (Numrich 1996: 61). Monks agonize over the issue of changing the rules to be followed by monks; supposedly changes are admissible regarding “minor” rules, but there is no clear understanding of what constitutes a “minor” rule (Numrich 1996: 50–52). Indeed the attempt to define pure Buddhism objectively or specify what minor rules are is futile.

The question is whether Asian-American groups will decline or modernize or do both.

### *Buddhist Influence*

The cultural influence of Buddhism comes not only from those who are committed to Buddhism but also from Buddhist sympathizers and from “not-just-Buddhists,” that is, people who have dual or multiple religious identities (Tweed 2002: 29). Buddhism has become part of American culture. For instance:

A brief perusal of Amazon.com’s books containing the word Zen reveals titles like *Zen in the Art of Golf* and *Zen Sex*. One also finds the word tossed around casually in more studied culture—a *New York Times* review of an art retrospective by Yoko Ono declares it “very Zen.” Whether noun or adjective, Zen has, it seems, come to denote a kind of free-floating state

of being, both relaxed and disciplined, engaged yet detached (McMahan 2002: 218).

While it is obvious that Buddhism has become part of American culture, its importance is far from clear. Buddhism has affected the popular consciousness by becoming a part of broad cultural movements. During the nineteenth century, Theosophy was invented in the United States, and many of its members were serious students of Buddhism.<sup>15</sup> At that time, and ever since, an interest in Buddhism has been, in part, a result of a broader interest in the Western alternative tradition, which emphasizes magical powers and gaining wisdom through mystical experiences (Ellwood 1973; Tamney 1992a: 9–10).

During the 1950s and '60s, Buddhism was popularized by members of the beat movement. The beat version of the good life incorporated elements of Buddhism, especially from the Zen form: "Buddhism offered the beats several things: meditation practices which could help put them in touch with themselves, a metaphysics that recognized conventional truth for what it is, an air of detachment that is described by Kerouac as 'just dance along'" (Tamney 1992a: 76). The beats took from Buddhism both a tool, meditation, and an attitude—"just dancing along" or an "engaged yet detached" attitude (McMahan 2002: 218).

More recently Buddhism has been incorporated into the New Age movement. I use "the New Age" to symbolize a shift in how Americans think about values. In the latter half of the twentieth century, many Americans felt the need to balance a belief in the value of the individual, with all that it implies, with a belief in the importance of interconnectedness. "In the New Age, personal freedom and growth come from relationships. Self-realization is not a matter of changing the world to fit our ideals; rather, personal growth is now understood in less obtrusive terms as becoming healthy, which ultimately requires living in harmony with nature" (Tamney 1992a: 97).

New Agers find in Buddhism a means of self-exploration and a process that results in the experience of the artificiality of all boundaries. People who said that they were influenced by the New Age movement, or the related holistic health movement, were more likely to say that they have been influenced by Buddhism as well (Wuthnow and Cadge: 2004).

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<sup>15</sup> Tweed (1992) called such people the "esoterics."

Lorne L. Dawson (2001: 355–59) has argued that Buddhism is significant because it strengthens an emerging religious consciousness in the United States—a consciousness similar to that of New Agers. This consciousness is characterized by an emphasis on a series of concerns: the individual, religious experience, personal growth, and a flexible structure that allows individuals to choose among religious paths, religious tolerance, and a holistic worldview (that is, less acceptance of traditional dualistic thinking—mind-body, material-spiritual). These emphases are not new, but their prominence is (Dawson 1998: 141). Dawson seems correct, although the significance of Buddhism as part of the New Age movement does not exhaust this religion’s cultural importance.

Buddhism has influenced American culture via the filtering interest of several professional groups: (a) Christian clergy trying to broaden their own religion by incorporating elements of Buddhism, (b) process philosophers following the lead of Alfred North Whitehead, (c) physicians who are using meditation as a form of medicine, and (d) therapists interested in new ways of exploring consciousness (Tamney 1992a). These professionals reach a much greater audience than monks preaching or teaching about Buddhism. As a result, most Americans experience Buddhism piecemeal and not as a total religious way of life.

Some clergy became interested in Buddhism because Christianity has lost touch with its mystical heritage. Some proponents of Buddhism have tried to fill this vacuum by portraying Buddhism as mysticism.

Perhaps the most important figure in the “repackaging” of Zen for the West is D.T. Suzuki. . . . The essence of Zen, for Suzuki, was mysticism, which he believed was common to other religious traditions as well. . . . While espousing the universality of mysticism, however, he also claimed that Zen was the purest and most direct form of mysticism, calling it “the ultimate fact of religion” (McMahan 2002: 221–22).

Thus Christian leaders have sought to learn from Buddhism about mystical practice. According to the Catholic monk, Thomas Merton, “Zen is consciousness unstructured by particular form . . . , a trans-cultural, trans-religious, transformed consciousness” (Egan 1982: 63). Merton, and others, spread this understanding of Buddhism in the 1960s. During the 1970s, Christian groups co-opted Buddhist meditational techniques, although they reoriented the practices to the purpose of experiencing the presence of God (Tamney 1992a: 84–87).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The reaction of Christians to Eastern religions is especially significant. The appeal

Western philosophers had begun suggesting that there is no such thing as a self since David Hume in the eighteenth century. However it is only during late modernity that this radical idea has received widespread attention, thanks in part to the development of process philosophy. Philosophers in this school have studied Buddhist ideas about reality and the self (Tamney 1992a).

At about the same time, meditation was medicalized. It became a means of reducing stress. In some cases, this entailed the secularization of meditation. Its practice was a means of adjusting to the stresses of a modern life. In other cases, meditation was recommended as part of a new lifestyle that included learning not to become attached to possessions, old identities, and harmful relationships; meditation was a means to achieve a healthy lifestyle by gaining greater personal flexibility and a profound sense of interconnectedness (Tamney 1992a: 88–90).

The influence of Buddhism on American psychotherapy has been profound (Imamura 1998). Transpersonal psychology is a branch of psychology that was part of the human growth movement and that tries to incorporate the insights of Eastern religions. It developed the notion of “disidentification”. The goal is to free the individual from all identifications:

The difference in the connotations of *attachments*, as used in the two traditions [therapy and Buddhism], foreshadows the relationship between them. In psychology, attachment is a valuable achievement of the infant and the caregiver, and only becomes a hindrance, when the attachment is insecure or rigid. In Buddhism, *any* attachment is a hindrance on the path” (Metcalf 2002: 349).

The end of the process of self-realization is to realize that there is no self, no “I” with which to identify. Our identity is a form of bondage, a straightjacket. We must lose it to be free (Tamney 1992a: 120–130). As one of the most effective popularizers of Zen Buddhism wrote: “The whole system of Zen discipline may thus be said to be nothing but a series of attempts to set us absolutely free from all forms of bondage” (Suzuki 1958: 27).

Buddhism, then, has influenced American culture through the beat and New Age movements. Moreover aspects of this religion have been co-opted and popularized by Christians, doctors, philosophers, and

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of these foreign religions can be expected to wane to the extent the dominant religion co-opts the most appealing features of these religions (Tamney 1992a: 159).

therapists. Various groups have been attracted by Buddhist meditation techniques and by its philosophy.

*Modernization Theory and Buddhist Research*

Generally scholars have failed to distinguish among modernization, Westernization, and Americanization, although all these terms have been used to describe contemporary changes in Buddhism. For instance, Yang (2000: 67) wrote that an American Buddhist temple “is seeking to modernize and Americanize Buddhism.” James William Coleman (2001) wrote about “Western Buddhism.” Paul David Numrich has acknowledged the problem. Moreover he predicted that Asian immigrant Buddhism would become more like American-convert Buddhism as well as “Buddhist modernism in Asia” (1996: 146–47, 162). Thus it would seem that all forms of Buddhism are converging on a single type—modernized Buddhism. But what is that type?

Martin Baumann has pointed out that scholars studying Buddhism in Asia have described a transformation from “traditionalist” to “modernist Buddhism” (2002: 54–55).<sup>17</sup> The latter form began to emerge in the nineteenth century in response to modernization and colonization. A popular meditation practice in the United States—insight meditation—was developed in Burma as part of the movement to modernize Buddhism (Fronsdal 1998). The situation is confused because of the tendency in Asia to refer not to modernized Buddhism but to “reform Buddhism” (Yang 2000: 70). As Yang wrote about the increasing power of women in Buddhist groups in the United States and in Taiwan: “This reflects a general modernization trend to which Reformed Buddhism has been trying to adapt in both nations” (2000: 85).

Meditation seems to be an important part of modernized Buddhism. It was not so among the masses of Asian Buddhists (Reader 1986; Baumann 2002: 57). However it is of central importance to Western Buddhists (Finney 1991; Asai and Williams 1999), and becoming more important to Asian-American Buddhists as well as to Buddhists in Asia

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<sup>17</sup> These scholars use “traditional” to refer to developments in Buddhism after the so-called “canonical” period; that is, from the third century B.C.E. to the nineteenth century. Baumann (2002) labels this period “traditionalist.” Unlike Baumann, I prefer to use the label “traditionalist” to refer to what have been called fundamentalist responses to modernity.

(Numrich 1996: xvii; Baumann 2002: 57; cf. the discussion and references about reform Buddhism in Tamney: 2005a: 8–9).

A major contribution to modernization theory could be made by Buddhist scholars who would systematically compare modernized Buddhism, reform Buddhism in Asia, Asian-American Buddhism, and Americanized Buddhism. Such an analysis would help theorists distinguish universal modernization from Western, Asian, and American versions of modernity.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, if Buddhist scholars would synthesize emerging Buddhism and Dawson's new religious consciousness, they would make a contribution to the understanding of late-modern religion.

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<sup>18</sup> Cadge is critical of Christian Smith's argument that religions with strong boundaries will grow. She claimed that the groups she studied grew because they are weakly bounded (2005: 151–52, 164, 240). After reading the material mentioned in this essay, it seems to me a similar conclusion could be reached regarding the role of strictness in producing religious growth (concerning strictness theory see Tamney 2005b and the references cited therein).

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### WOMEN, GENDER AND FEMINISM IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION: THEORY, RESEARCH AND SOCIAL ACTION

Nancy Nason-Clark and Barbara Fisher-Townsend

Religion continues to be a powerful and empowering force in societies around the world. It helps to shape—and indeed is shaped by—the needs, dreams and ideals of men and women everywhere. Taking into account the countless meaningful roles that spiritual practices, religious symbolism, and syncretism play in the lives of ordinary people draws attention away from a preoccupation with elites and institutions and toward emergent vitality and hope, wherever those can be found. This is the heart and soul of lived religion, as is it conceptualized by recent scholars (e.g., Hall 1997).

As an analytical frame, gender is seldom at the center of conceptualizing religious experience or examining its impact upon believers—even less so, a self-conscious focus on women that begins and ends with feminist epistemologies at the core. While various theoretical models sympathetic to the struggles of women, race, and class have sought—with some success—to restructure academic discourse as it relates to women's lives and circumstances, few have been able to carve deep inroads into the subspecialty of our discipline that we label sociology of religion.

We are not alone in thinking about these matters. Numerous feminist scholars were part of an early cohort that saw their intellectual and social activist activities in and beyond the academy develop at roughly the same time and hence become almost indistinguishable from each other (see Nason-Clark and Neitz 2000: 393). Interestingly, for many of these women the trajectories along which their lives, their work and their activism evolved were inextricably linked. The issues of silencing, credentialing, and invisibility were central motifs, along with the disruptions, contradictions and celebrations that come along life's pathway—be they personal or professional. By and large, they received little feminist nurturance as their careers evolved, and the mutual interplay and impact of their biographies and research agendas suggested that

charting new territory took a personal toll even as it was made possible by the experience (or fear) of marginalization. Both researchers and research participants were changed in the process. But was there an impact on the discipline?

Those researchers more recently introduced into the academy are unlikely to share too many overlapping features of this narrative construction. They are adapting feminist theories and feminist methodologies through a lens that is able to take for granted several features of university life and academic discourse that was unknown a generation before. Without a doubt, our disciplines have changed in terms of the constituency of scholars, the publications, and the questions deemed appropriate for analysis. Several accounts of women's participation at annual meetings, even thirty years ago, reveal that much has changed. Women have been presenting papers, publishing journal articles and books, serving as reviewers and editors, elected as presidents and officers of professional organizations, and slogging in the academic arena amidst grant-writing, fieldwork, and data analysis. But has this changed the way we see or conceptualize the lives of women, men, and gender?

Not long ago, we wrote a chapter on gender for Helen Rose Ebaugh's *Handbook of Religion and Social Institutions* (2005). There we argued that evidence of religious beliefs and religious practices seem to be obvious to just about everyone except those whose research and passion is linked to feminism or gender studies. In substantiating this claim, we chose five recent books discussing gender issues or women's lives from our bookshelves (Crow and Gotell 2000; Kimmel and Aronson 2004; Lips 2000; Spade and Valentine 2004; Wood 2003). This non-random experiment produced troubling results: in not one of these anthologies was there even a chapter devoted specifically to spirituality or to the religious quest. Then we proceeded to turn the tables and have a brief look at recent collections of essays in the sociology of religion (Aldridge 2000; Dawson 2003, Dillon 2003; Hood 1995; Swatos 1998). Here, there was a dim light flickering at the boundaries. While less than 10% of the print space was devoted to the lives of women or used a lens that featured a gender analysis, there was a chapter, or at most two, in each collection.

We acknowledged then, and repeat now, that perhaps this was too cruel or too rudimentary an introduction into the relationship between religion, women, and gender. But its results stand: Spirituality is not on the feminist radar screen, and a feminist or gender lens is not often employed when considering matters religious.

*Recent Assessments on the Interface between Feminism  
and the Sociology of Religion*

There is little doubt that the last fifty years has witnessed a dramatic shift in terms of the rights and responsibilities of women, with slower shifts occurring in academic discourse to document these changes, understand their impact in and beyond the family, and consider anew the connections and interface between gender, the sacred, and the profane. The wakeup call to sociologists of religion came from women who were positioned early within our professional ranks to command the respect of their colleagues. Ruth Wallace, for example, highlighted the problem in her 1975 presidential address before the Association for the Sociology of Religion, and one of the earliest published articles to appear was authored by Marie Augusta Neal in 1975; interestingly, both of these women were or had been members of religious orders. These few examples notwithstanding, the field of sociology of religion had very little published work prior to the 1980s (see Neitz 1993). In a later presidential address to the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Ruth Wallace (1997; cf. 2000) again implored her colleagues to account for the under representation of women in studies of religion.

A cursory look at articles and book reviews published between 1994 and 2003 in *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review*, *Review of Religious Research*, and *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* revealed that the percentage of gender-related manuscripts published ranged from 12% to 21.5% (Nason-Clark and Fisher-Townsend 2005). A more recent update indicated proportionately fewer articles on gender in the last few years.<sup>1</sup> Is this evidence that feminism in the academy has been subjected to the same backlash reported within the mainstream society? Alternatively, is it perhaps simply an indication that the impact of feminist thinking and a gender lens has been more broadly appropriated and hence is now slightly more challenging to detect? Or, maybe the trickle is steady, but the last few years were simply an aberration. At any rate, there is little to celebrate in these numbers alone.

Several writers have sought to explicate this relationship between feminism and religion, some with considerable skill and finesse. In the *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, Mary Jo Neitz entitles her assessment of the feminist inquiry into matters religious as “Dis/Location.”

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<sup>1</sup> The numbers are now between 0.5% and 9.5%.

She calls scholars to a “radical rethinking of how we know what we know and for whom we undertake this project of knowledge production” (2003: 276). As Neitz surveys the sociology of religion field, she argues that there is ample evidence of studies that make women visible or that explore questions of gender; we also outline some examples of recent scholarship at the close of this chapter. Yet, she writes, few have employed an alternative epistemology, one that incorporates “an active text, in dialogue with a reader” (p. 288). Location matters for both researchers and the researched. Neitz’s solution draws upon the theoretical underpinnings of both Dorothy Smith’s “relations of ruling” and Patricia Hill Collins’s focus on local knowledge that can offer resistance to the dominant knowledge—theorizing that often comes in a narrative form, like storytelling. “Adding women has a wonderfully disruptive potential,” Neitz concludes “...for adding women is a dislocating act.” It offers new questions, destroys old categories, and in so doing “show us a world that is gendered, and... why that matters” (p. 293).

In *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion* (2001), Bernice Martin explores evidence of feminist consciousness in an essay entitled, “The Pentecostal Gender Paradox: A Cautionary Tale for the Sociology of Religion.” Herein she considers one of the fastest growing religious developments in the contemporary world: the expansion of Pentecostal-style Christianity in Latin America. She argues that it is a “repeat-with-variations of an old, familiar story” (p. 52), for Methodism accomplished much the same for early industrial workers of England and Wales, as well as American pioneers and settlers, pushing ever westward to the Pacific Coast. Her central argument (p. 53) is this: The apparently repressive character of the movement “masks a very different substantive reality in which women exercise a considerable degree of influence over domestic and family matters, find important arenas of religious expression, and even achieve a surprising measure of individual autonomy.” The paradox, as it were, has another component, as she continues:

[A]t least in the Pentecostal case, the more nuanced view out of which the documentation of the Pentecostal gender paradox has emerged was not primarily a feminist achievement at all. Certainly the researchers who have described the phenomenon have been aware of feminist ideas but they have not situated themselves, as scholars, within paradigms defined by feminism. In fact, explicitly feminist researchers, even those working among the very populations in which the Pentecostal explosion was occurring, have failed to notice anything of the kind happening.

“Why?” Bernice Martin asks. Why should this paradox be so curiously invisible to sociologists of religion, feminists and sociologists of the family? *Good question.* Her answer is outlined through the nicely written prose of her chapter: in part we have been wearing blinders, in part we have been distracted by other things.

Considering blinders and distractions seems like a very helpful, while immensely practical, way to approach the integration of women, feminism, and a gender lens within recent scholarship broadly categorized by the umbrella label “sociology of religion.” Have the bright lights of the secularization debate blinded us? Have we been seduced by the number count? Have we failed to understand that varieties of religious experiences and nuances of religious practice invigorate traditional rites with new and localized meaning? Conversely, have we been so caught up in believing that feminist axioms and religious expression are antithetical that we cannot see spiritual longing and belonging when and where it exists? To be sure, professional blinders exist both within and beyond scholarship devoted to the study of religion or framed by a feminist analysis. And distractions abound—in the academy, within religious institutions, among funding agencies and would-be recipients alike.

### *Asking Broader Questions*

John Stackhouse, Jr., (2005) opens his book titled *Finally Feminist: A Pragmatic Christian Understanding of Gender*, with two questions—“aren’t we done with gender?” and “haven’t all the relevant issues been raised, all the texts scrutinized, all the alternatives arrayed?” You can almost feel his frustration jumping off the page. *Surely, we can return to the ways things used to be done*—seems to be the underlying current. To be sure, there are many who would echo his frustration and not only from the point of view that feminism has altered the “level” playing field of the past. Feminism challenged structures, texts, elites, and offered ordinarily marginalized groups a chance to speak and be heard.

Since the early years of the women’s movement, feminist scholars in the social sciences have been attempting to reconceptualize methodological paradigms, largely due to concerns about how to recognize and comprehend the intersectionality of race, class, gender, and other structural features of societies (Hill-Collins 1997). Central concerns were expressed within feminism about inappropriate essentializing of women and men as well as the apparent impossibility of accurate interpretation, translation, and representation among radically different cultures

(Harding and Norberg 2005). Compelling reasons for using a feminist or gender lens include the need to acknowledge, to investigate, and to challenge our notions about men and women; to question the adequacy of our explanatory theories; and to contest current conceptions of gender (McHugh 2005). Not surprisingly, contesting conventional ways of thinking (inside and outside the academy) and advocating social change blur the division between social theory and social action.

But classifying feminist work and categorizing various forms of feminist analysis has never been straightforward. As a result, some scholars have rejected the idea of identifying their work as “feminist” and opted for the term “gendered” as more neutral (Adomako Ampofo et al. 2004). Whatever the term, the struggle continues.

So what does using a gender lens involve? According to Gerson (2004: 153) a gender lens prods “researchers to transcend gender stereotypes, to see gender as an institution, to recognize the multifaceted nature of recent social change . . . [and] also helps researchers focus on the link between individuals and institutions, the dynamics of social and individual change, and the structural and cultural tensions created by inconsistent change.” Transcending gender stereotypes means that researchers must clearly understand that gender is a fluid and varied dimension of social life—its definitions change as options are restructured, beliefs about gender difference and gender-appropriate behavior are redefined, and social institutions shift. It is thus never static.

On the other hand, seeing gender as an institution acknowledges that while religion is experienced in intensely personal ways, it has sources and constraints that sometimes counter individual efforts at autonomy. Focusing on individuals only obscures the ways that options and opportunities are unequally distributed, while using a gender lens directs attention to the social structuring of inequality and locates the phenomena within a social and cultural context that marginalizes certain groups. Finally, recognizing the multifaceted nature of change is also important: a gender lens facilitates a fuller investigation of the full range of consequences related to change, for women as well as men.

Accepted wisdom is challenged and new ways of doing things are explored within such a framework. A “feminist” lens involves the adoption of research methodologies that are “intellectually alert to and sensitive about what disadvantaged groups want to know” (Harding and Norberg 2005: 2011). This then pushes researcher and researched alike to explore new modes of collaboration in the dissemination and implications of research findings (Nason-Clark 2005). Thus, an essen-

tial ingredient in the feminist solution is the practical implications of research projects for the improvement of women's and men's lives.

The use of a feminist standpoint methodology serves as an alternative axis-point of investigation, a site from which to begin, and represents one way to transform types of imbalances into powerful intellectual and political resources. Within the purview of feminist theory, a feminist standpoint approach enables a more critical reflection on the social context of participants' lives and recognizes the significance of experience. According to Dorothy Smith (1992: 24) a feminist standpoint as a mode of inquiry pays "explicit attention to the social relations embedded in women's everyday activities."

With reference to the work of Harding (1998), Sprague and Hayes (2000) state: "Standpoint epistemology argues that all knowledge is constructed in a specific matrix of physical location, history, culture and interests." Additionally, in challenging and unmasking positivist notions of objectivity and knowledge creation, feminist standpoint theory emphasizes the concept of intersubjectivity wherein the voices of all participants are considered equally knowing and the collaborative creation of knowledge is facilitated.

According to Ward and Edelstein (2006: 197–98) "[t]he world's religions are major sites for authoritative knowledge" and "women's spiritual lives are often secret, muted, or marginal when we view them through the lenses of state government, world religions, and male scholars." Clearly, using a feminist or gendered approach to explore and validate woman-centered experiences can make enormous contributions to our ability to understand, contextualize and evaluate the contemporary world.

Secrecy, invisibility and power imbalances: all central ingredients in a feminist analysis of social relations, including those that are explicitly religious. Add to this list the primacy of women's lives (as well as those of men) in the design, in the field, in the analysis, and in the written text that follows. Also critical is the recognition of the plurality of experiences of both women and men, recognizing fully that in part such differences are often a reflection of class, race, and other location and contextual structures. Carefully delineating and effectively teasing apart these competing factors of location and context is central, the importance of which must not be underestimated.

*A Cursory Look at Three Current Writers*

It is easy to claim that feminism has—or has not—made inroads into the academy or into our disciplines by reference to our own personal or professional experiences of empowerment or disempowerment. It is harder, though, to offer an accurate, balanced and intentionally nuanced account of the myriad of ways in which such has been accomplished. It is a challenge to offer both depth and breadth in a few pages. We have chosen to offer depth by reference to three recently published books providing readers a glimpse into how contemporary researchers of religion are attempting to weave women's experiences and issues of gender consciousness into the data collection, its analysis, and the way results are disseminated and poised to alter our social world. Our brief nod to breadth will be a cursory identification of several questions/areas of inquiry researchers have attempted to address in the sociology of religion where a gender or feminist lens has played more than a minor role.

*Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity*

R. Marie Griffith's 2004 book, *Born Again Bodies*, offers an historical perspective by which to assess the religious undercurrents of America's current obsession with the body. Since the body provides a mirror for the spirit, a fit and trim body offers a different message of religious authenticity and vitality than heavier, rounder, softer flesh. Herein lies the central message of the book: the current Christian fitness and diet culture is but one example of a pervasive tendency within American religious history to pair the *text* of the flesh with the *state* of the soul.

The centrality of the body is one that sociologists of religion have not emphasized, so its emphasis here is a welcome corrective (cf. McGuire 1990 as well). The disciplined body—whether by restricting food intake through fasts or dieting, or restricting sexual contact—revealed what other bodies could not: loving, powerfully intimate, relationships with the divine. By contrast, fat bodies signaled sin, filth and laziness. In this way, Griffith argues that the focus on slimness contains a racial categorization that links Protestant ideals of beauty and salvation with thin white bodies. Contemporary religious diet writers employ the obsession of American secular culture with “perfect bodies” to mould, restrict and remake bodies that have been tainted by the world and the power of undisciplined desire.

In essence, the body reveals what the spirit may wish to hide: unbridled affections, and a propensity to submit to temptation. By resisting such pleasures, born again bodies become *fit for Him* (Shedd 1957), evidence that there is *more of Jesus and less of me* (Cavanaugh 1976). Testimonials such as Deborah Pierce's book, *I Prayed Myself Slim* (1960) offer Griffith a window through which to assess the intertwining of self-condemnation and religious victory. Speaking of Pierce's book, Griffith writes:

Alongside each day's menu was a prayer, set to liturgical cadences, and meant to be repeated throughout the day for humility, recollection of gluttony as sinful, and strength to overcome it... Enfolding this type of self-denial within the long history of Christian asceticism reaped wondrously modern-day results, as Pierce embraced the body and beauty standards of American white middle-class culture as God's will for all, marking deviance from that model as sin. (p. 162)

Since slimness comes at a high price, the class issues involved in the dieting and exercise culture cannot be overlooked. With a distinct focus on both race and gender, Griffith describes the angst of the believer who conceptualizes fat as sin and the otherness of bodies not slim, nor trim. Here she draws important links between racism, religion and ideologies of the perfect body. In her critique of the Christian diet culture, Griffith reveals the impact of the winners and losers in this relentless pursuit of thinness, fitness, and the sculpted body.

The rich historical background is brought to the reader with wit and elegance. We feast, as it were, on Marie Griffith's expansive knowledge and impressive portrayal of the many strands in the tapestry of body discipline and Christian perfectionism. There is little doubt that she writes with passion and authority. But there is one disappointment: The voices of contemporary practitioners of the diet culture never take center stage. It is not a rich ethnography in that sense, nor is it a nuanced account of how gender and racial intermingle as women and men make sense of the personal and political messages offered by prophets who promise that you can *pray the weight away*. In this way, *Born Again Bodies* does not attain the ethnographic sophistication of *God's Daughters*, but its contextual sophistication, particularly the light it sheds on the interface between the body and the spirit across the history of Christianity, is impressive indeed.

*Heaven's Kitchen: Living Religion at "God's Love We Deliver"*

Courtney Bender's 2003 ethnographic study takes place amidst a hectic backdrop of mundane activity where cleaning potatoes, cutting tomatoes, and packaging meals are carried out with care and precision, within a nonprofit, nonreligious agency serving men and women dying of AIDS in and around Manhattan. It is a study of relationships, practices and policies that are both culturally sensitive and yet imbued with interesting markers of religious significance.

Despite its name, the agency, God's Love We Deliver, and its mission are secular: to provide gourmet meals to home-bound people. Bender's account reveals ways in which the agency was transformed, as the emphasis on the gourmet-like quality meals and their presentation to clients evolved into more scientifically driven approaches that emphasized the nutritional quality of the food. It is as much a story of cultural transformation within one agency as it is evidence of lived religion in an explicitly nonreligious context.

For Bender, shared practice is the unifying theme of *Heaven's Kitchen*. While shared meanings concerning the work and those who benefit from it clearly exist, much is left unsaid at God's Love We Deliver. Primarily, it is a recognition on the part of volunteers of the religious plurality of both the servers and those to be served. But there is a highly valued—even if unspoken—commitment to bring some tangible relief and warmth to those who suffer alone and in silence. It is the work, rather than the words, that are important—reminiscent of the book's goal to signal practices of religious significance rather than the rhetoric of institutions or their elites.

Since the kitchen offers space to both men and women, religious and nonreligious alike, it would have been interesting and beneficial to see how the production of food offers a window into the gendered experiences of the volunteers or those who receive it.

*Hidden Heritage: The Legacy of the Crypto-Jews*

Janet Jacobs' 2002 study of gender and cultural preservation on the construction of religious and ethnic identity is a moving account of contemporary Crypto-Jews attempting to understand and reclaim their hidden ancestry. These were descendants of European Jewish parents forced to adopt Christianity during the time of the Spanish Inquisition. Informed by feminism and psychoanalysis, as well as social psychological approaches to the study of religion, *Hidden Heritage* interweaves notions

of memory, identity, and secrecy into the development and maintenance of a religious culture.

Silence and disclosure are key aspects of Jacobs' analysis. Given her earlier work on incest, *Victimized Daughters* (1994), and on sexual violation in religious contexts, *Divine Disenchantment* (1989), these are deeply understood experiences intersecting the lives of disempowered people—often, but not exclusively, women. In *Hidden Heritage* she brings to the surface dilemmas and struggles born from a culture of secrecy, one where traces of a common Jewish heritage are almost non-existent. Yet, the ritual life of women, she implores us, “offers clues to Jewish ancestry that remain hidden among idiosyncratic beliefs and customs. Through the preservation of both oral history and ritual performance, women have been at the center of the recovery process for modern descendants” (p. 42).

She draws our attention afresh to the gendered nature of culture-bearing. The analysis reveals the importance of fragments, constructed through personal perceptions of rites, customs, and traditions mainly enacted within the familial context. Transformed by time and the processes of fragmentation and assimilation, these religious customs and practices offer evidence of crypto-Jewish traces within the religious ritual experiences of contemporary Latina women. Jacobs argues that this innovation of blended rituals and practices together with those of indigenous traditions was meant to conceal—at least originally—the persistence of the forbidden celebrations. Not unlike the case with other religious women around the world, the food customs—holiday cooking as well as weekly practices of food consumption—represented one tangible (yet deeply meaningful) way that women maintained a connection to their cultural heritage and passed that on to those they loved (and fed).

The narratives discussed in *Hidden Heritage* that reveal the struggle to reclaim a Jewish ancestry are thick with disclosures (of family secrets) and remembrance (of family customs and ritualized behaviors). Beginning with her father's disclosure on his deathbed, Jacobs takes the reader on a journey that renews our enthusiasm to understand how individual men and women construct their religious and family narratives within multiethnic and multicultural social contexts. Amid the many interesting and interconnected ideas raised in the book are the role of the primary caregiver as a spiritual signifier, the creation of home-centered spiritual traditions, and the presence of empathic bonds within and beyond generational and gender lines. Likewise, she considers

the role of the stranger—taking her cue from Simmel—where one was considered always to be a wanderer, the ethnic outsider deprived of full membership in the community (p. 127). Ultimately the stranger may choose to “come home,” bringing emotional reactions created by the possibility of choice and the longing to belong. One cannot—or at least should not—underestimate the deep sense of ethnic loss experienced by those she studied. Neither should one minimize the centrality of women’s ritualized expressions in the recovery of hidden ancestry.

### *Overlapping Features*

*Born Again Bodies*, *Heaven’s Kitchen* and *Hidden Heritage* can be taken as three different examples of the many ways in which feminism and gender have impacted the contemporary social scientific study of religion. Marie Griffith takes a relationship that many others have considered and gives it a fresh twist that leads the reader, and ultimately the discipline, to reconsider conventional wisdom on faith, the body, and food. In some ways, her account is ripe for a fuller feminist analysis, yet she chooses to offer us only snap-shots through the gender lens, perhaps to heighten its impact. Yet, it is an excellent example of highlighting context and location, seeing what others have failed to see and drawing connections that reveal hidden messages of racism and classicism within the ever popular religiously imbued industries to promote perfect bodies to encompass born again spirits. This nexus of context and location is one that feminist scholars in particular have sought to highlight. *Born Again Bodies* offers persuasive evidence that “constructs of multiplicity” (Hills-Collins 1997; cf. Gilkes 2000; Neitz 2003) must be taken into account. In essence, *location matters*.

Courtney Bender looks at what others might consider a most unlikely place for god-talk and religious vitality. In so doing, she reminds us of blinders and blind spots in much contemporary assessment and analysis of religion and culture. At God’s Love We Deliver, the silence about AIDS amongst volunteers stands in stark contrast to their impressive commitment to those impacted by it. Similarly, *Heaven’s Kitchen* may be touched by angels in terms of mission, but references to the spiritual are always carefully crafted and often subtly discouraged when voiced. Paradoxes and riddles abound in the preparation of gourmet meals for those who might otherwise not be fed—from the level of chopping onions, to professional chefs who plan the menus, and upstairs staff who

procure and manage the resources necessary to underwrite the action plan. The flexibility of the analysis, coupled with the sophistication of the ethnographic work, brings to the fore that which otherwise would remain hidden, marginalized, or sidelined—the web that a feminist analysis prepared us to spin. *Spotlight what is hidden.*

Janet Jacobs weaves personal biography, gender sensitivity, and an impressive understanding of religious marginalization into her search for cultural preservation and ethnic identity. Through her account we learn clues that can be appropriated to the study of women in endangered communities well beyond the borders of Latina women recovering their hidden Crypto-Jewish ancestry. Here, accounts of ordinary life take on extraordinary significance. Holiday cooking was a religious act, one where women reinforced bonds of togetherness in the present and forged links with their ancestors. Food customs and meal preparation offered women an opportunity to infuse domestic chores with religious meaning. In essence, they cooked their way into the hearts of family members and thereby kindled a lasting love for their religious heritage. Above all, it became an act of remembrance and recovery. The intersections, then, of crypto-Judaism and Christianity—merge in interesting and compelling ways, revealing both cultural and religious markers. Jacobs' attention to a meticulous process of research design and fieldwork preparation enables these connections to surface. Reducing boundaries between researcher and researched enhances the storytelling. Ordinary life can offer religious results extraordinaire. It takes exceptional skill to encourage men and women to highlight what they believe to be ordinary. In *Hidden Heritage*, Jacobs brings the ordinary to life, revealing its sacred and enduring significance for religious vitality. *Celebrate the mundane.*

Location matters. Spotlight what is hidden. Celebrate the mundane. Each of these dicta draws on a rich feminist heritage. *Born Again Bodies*, *Heaven's Kitchen*, and *Hidden Heritage* each reveal that the legacy of the second wave of feminism has impacted contemporary work in a variety of ways. So much more than stirring a few pots, feminist cooks have altered the layout of the kitchen, changed the menu plan, and served heavenly delights.

We have chosen to celebrate the advancements of a feminist analysis with reference to three recent ethnographic studies, each revealing features consistent with taking the lives of women very seriously and intentionally following a methodology that highlights difference and gives voice to the marginalized. We conclude our chapter by presenting

a series of questions that have captured the research agendas and written pages of seasoned scholars and those newer to the field, questions indicating breadth and scope in terms of either feminism or gender. In each case, we have highlighted ten or fewer articles or books to keep the list contained:

1. What is the interplay between innovation and tradition as women move into positions of religious power in institutional settings? "Female Clergy in the Contemporary Protestant Church," Patricia Chang (1997); "Clergywomen of the Pioneer Generation" and "Women and Clergywomen," Joy Charlton (1997, 2000); *Ordaining Women*, Mark Chaves (1997); *Gender and Work: The Case of the Clergy*, Edward Lehman (1993); "Women Clergy Research and the Sociology of Religion," Adair Lummis and Paula Nesbitt (2000); "Good' Jobs and 'Bad' Jobs: Differences in the Clergy Employment Relationship," Charles Mueller and Elaine McDuff (2002); *Religion and Social Policy*, Paula Nesbitt (1997); "The Stained Glass Ceiling," Paul Sullins (2000); *They Call Her Pastor*, Ruth Wallace (1992); *Clergy Women*, Barbara Brown Zikmund, Adair Lummis, and Patricia Chang (1998).
2. How can we understand the impact of marginalization upon the spiritual trajectories of lesbian/gay/transsexual/bi/questioning men and women? "What is Right? What is Caring?" Penny Edgell Becker (1997); "Conservative Protestantism and Tolerance toward Homosexuals," Amy Burdette, Christopher Ellison, and Terrence Hill (2005); "The Gospel Hour: Liminality, Identity, and Religion in a Gay Bar," Edward Gray and Scott Thumma (1997); "Queering the Dragonfest," Mary Jo Neitz (2000); *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven*, Uta Ranke-Heinemann (1990); "Being Gay and Jewish," Randall Schnoor (2006); "When Sheila's a Lesbian," Melissa Wilcox (2002); "Queering Religious Texts," Andrew Yip (2005).
3. How do the choices and constraints of contemporary life impact upon the attitudes, beliefs and practices of the religious and non-religious, women as well as men? *Bible Believers*, Nancy Ammerman (1987); *Tradition in a Rootless World*, Lynn Davidman (1991); "Doctrine, Diffusion, and the Development of Esalen," Marion Goldman (2003); *Rachel's Daughters*, Debra Kaufman (1991); "Kemetic Orthodoxy: Ancient Egyptian Religion on the Internet," Marlyn Krogh and Brooke Pillifant (2004); *Jesus in Disneyland*, David Lyon (2000); "The Pentecostal Gender Paradox," Bernice Martin (2001); *Material*

- Christianity*, Colleen McDannell (1995); *Moon Sisters, Krishna Mothers, Rajneesh Lovers*, Susan Palmer (1994); *God and the Chip*, William Stahl (1999).
4. As forms of religious devotion develop, evolve, transform and decline, can we observe gender patterns or threads? *Women in the Vanishing Cloister*, Helen Rose Ebaugh (1993); *Religion and the New Immigrants*, Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz (2000); "Enduring Affiliation and Gender Doctrine for Shiloh Sisters and Rajneesh Sannyasins," Marion Goldman and Lynne Isaacson (1999); "The Feminization of the Black Baptist Churches in Nova Scotia," B. Moreau (1999); "Mother Mary," Michelle Spencer-Arsenault (2000); "Together and in Harness," Cheryl Townsend Gilkes (1985); *Alone of All Her Sex*, Marina Warner (1985); *Gatherings in Diaspora*, R. Stephen Warner and Judith Wittner (1998); *Defecting in Place*, Miriam Winter, Adair Lummis, and Allison Stokes (1994); *The Rise and Decline of Catholic Religious Orders*, Patricia Wittberg (1994).
  5. In what ways, and by what processes, can we say that religious faith is a gendered experience? "Sifting through Tradition," Lynn Resnick Dufour (2000); "The Marginalization of Evangelical Feminism," Sally Gallagher (2003); *If it Wasn't for the Women*, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes (2000); *Fundamentalism and Gender*, John Stratton Hawley (1994); *Divine Disenchantment*, Janet Jacobs (1989); *The Riddle of Amish Culture*, Donald Kraybill (1989); "Feminist Theory and Religious Experience," Mary Jo Neitz (1995); "Women's Cocoon Work," Susan Palmer (2003); "Latina Religious Practice," Milagros Peña and Lisa Frehill (1998); "Mother Mary," Michelle Spencer-Arsenault (2000).
  6. What is the intersection of faith, family ties and the ways men and women understand and enact partnering and parenting? *Remaking the Godly Marriage*, John Bartkowski (2001); "Veiled Submission," John Bartkowski and Jen'nan Ghazal Read (2003); *Shared Beliefs, Different Lives*, Lori Beaman (1999); *Tradition in a Rootless World*, Lynn Davidman (1991); *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, Sally Gallagher (2003); "Doctrine, Diffusion, and the Development of Esalen," Marion Goldman (2003); *God's Daughters*, Marie Griffith (1997); *God Gave Us the Right*, Christel Manning (1999); *Conservative Protestant Mothering*, Lanette Ruff (2006); *Soft Patriarchs, New Men*, W. Bradford Wilcox (2004).

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF LATINO RELIGIONS: THE FORMATION OF THE THEORETICAL BINARY AND BEYOND

Alberto López Pulido

The Latina and Latino (hereafter “Latin”) religious experience in the United States represents a composite of multiple sacred and cultural meaning systems and traditions throughout the Americas and Caribbean that span centuries. From Lukumí expressions in Cuba to Hispano Presbyterianism in New Mexico, Latin religiosity is broad in terms of history and tradition. Consequently interpreting the polyphonic and multi-layered sources that comprise these expressions is directly dependent on the geographic, historical and/or social context that one enters for purposes of investigation and analysis. Latin religious expressions in south Texas in terms of race, ethnicity, and tradition would differ from those found in places such as Union City, New Jersey. To provide an overarching discussion regarding the range of Latin religious expression is beyond the scope of this essay. Such an endeavor would take us into areas outside of sociological inquiry in the study of religion. With this in mind, the central focus of this chapter is to provide a review of the early sociological research focusing on Latin religions and to speak directly to the implications of this intellectual terrain for their broader study. Consequently, I address the importance and significance of interdisciplinary scholarship upon the sociological project for understanding Latin religions and as a result examine a variety of ethnic and sacred traditions in an attempt to address the most critical aspects of these communities.

This essay is organized along four major historical moments for intellectually capturing the origins and progression of Latin religions in the United States. Period one covers the early twentieth century in the borderlands and is described as Borderland Church studies. Period two encompasses the mid-twentieth century from 1968 to 1990 and is identified as the Sociology of Latin Religions, when the bulk of early scholarship in Latin religions was envisioned and written. This is a critical

period of study because it establishes the groundwork for bringing forth a theoretical binary between institutional and popular religion in the sociology of Latin religions and allows for a movement by Latina and Latino scholars to imagine and theoretically affirm indigenous voices that legitimate the so-called “dysfunctional folk” in the sociology of religion.<sup>1</sup> The third period is marked by the recognition by scholars of the importance of interdisciplinary scholarship in Latin religions between 1991 and 1996 as it moved beyond past sociological frameworks by incorporating ethnic and religious studies perspectives into its analysis. The fourth and final period from 1997 to the present builds on the work of period three and incorporates a transnational and borderlands perspective with a new interpretation of Latin religious studies infused with cultural studies scholarship. I wrap up with a reflection on the importance of feminist and theological perspectives in the analysis of Latin religions and conclude with a mention of the most recent scholarship in the field and its significance to the field.

### *Borderland Church Studies*

The Latin sacred experience in the United States does not emerge as an intellectual area of study until the twentieth century. The most noted and first study to address Latin traditions in the form of Spanish, Indigenous, and Mexican expressions within the social and historical context of the American Southwest borderlands region would be the impressive historical scholarship of Carlos E. Castañeda. His seven-volume work on the history of the Catholic Church, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519–1936*, was a monumental feat that would span several decades of his life before its final completion. It was the brainchild of the Texas State Council of the Knights of Columbus, a fraternal order of Catholic laymen, who in their 1923 convention resolved to produce a comprehensive history of Catholicism in Texas. Castañeda expressed great enthusiasm about working on this project because of his great interest in the early missionary movement in Texas described by him as “a great epic in the gallant effort to spread our holy faith to the

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<sup>1</sup> Indigenous voices represent those spoken voices and written narratives that come from the community base. It does not necessarily mean that the scholarship is produced by indigenous people, but rather, by people who are sensitive to counter-narratives from those in power and who acknowledge alternative voices to the status quo.

farthermost ends of the trackless wilds of New Spain” (Almaráz 1999: 39). His most important contribution for the study of Latin religions would prove to be his revisionist perspective that acknowledged Spanish and Mexican contributions to the foundational history of Texas, which was missing in the master narrative. Castañeda emphasized his vision that the borderland region was settled by Spain a hundred years before the founding of Plymouth and that this historical contribution must become a central part of the knowledge base that informs borderland scholarship.

However, an acknowledgment of Spanish culture and tradition brought with it Roman Catholicism, with all its contradictions and challenges, which Castañeda fully embraced without providing a critique and exploration of its historical limitations. From his vantage point, the Spanish were the vanguard of European civilization in the New World and were led in this venture by the Church and its missionaries. The church was the main civilizing force in the conquest of the Americas; he embraced the “moral force of the Church” and the “civilizing” work carried on by the Church for three hundred years before Anglos set foot in Texas. Castañeda unfortunately distorted history and failed to examine the full complexities of the Spanish American past, fraught as it was with conquest, destruction, and exploitation of the indigenous and mestizo people and their sacred traditions (García 1989: 236–50).<sup>2</sup>

According to historian Mario T. García (1989: 233) Castañeda’s perspective was heavily influenced by a social context within World War II, with its theme of democracy against fascism that embraced a “moralistic” interpretation of history of good versus evil. European expansion was viewed as advancement in human history. In Texas it

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<sup>2</sup> This critique would become a central theme for contemporary borderland historians as they conceptualized a more balanced history of (predominantly Roman Catholic) Christianity in Texas that sought to incorporate indigenous perspectives despite the fact that they used missionary records as their sources for historical documentation. This new historiography acknowledged the creation of “faith communities” and their evolution and presence in the contemporary world. Although Castañeda and his perspective is subjected to a critique by this new historiography, the latter still centers Roman Catholicism as a starting point and places it at the core of its analysis. This is critical information for this essay because it challenges the binary tension between institutional versus popular religious traditions that several scholars have identified as a result of isolated and segregated communities and that has become a central part of understanding the Latino sacred world in contemporary scholarship. This topic is thoroughly identified and described in this essay as the “isolationist thesis” of Latino Catholicism, first articulated by Patrick McNamara. The best example of this new historiography is identified in the work of Gilberto M. Hinojosa (1989, 1990).

was Christianity against the forces of evil: as Christianity advanced, so too did humanity. It was a complementary history in which Castañeda saw history as providing more grounds for cooperation between Mexican Americans and Anglos than those for conflict as these communities evolved into the contemporary period. Regardless of one's opinion regarding the perspective and scholarly work of Castañeda, his scholarship had a major impact on the understanding of the history of Roman Catholic expressions on Spanish and Mexican cultures in the borderlands.

The early twentieth century also marks the period of studies produced by the Federal Writers' Projects that offer a glimpse into the religious life of Cuban Americans in Ybor City, Florida. According to Lisandro Pérez (1994: 179–81) they describe the establishment of Catholic churches in the region by Jesuit priests in this hub of early Cuban immigration. A subtle binary is present as Cuban immigrants in the 1930s are described as rarely if ever attending weekly church services, but yet possessing a picture of "Our Lady" in their homes, accompanied by a burning votive candle below it. In addition to Roman Catholic practices, the manuscript reports the presence of "Nanigo (voodooism)" and other "superstitions and customs of Cuban Negroes" during this historical period.

The earliest social science studies addressing Latino religions and spirituality in the United States appear in the 1940s and '50s in the form of short journal articles and dissertations. Walter R. Goldschmidt (1944) published what appears to be the first sociological study that treats Mexican Americans in his analysis. Utilizing the work of H. Richard Niebuhr, this insightful study examines correlations between social class, race, and denominationalism in rural California communities. This research affirms that "outsider" groups such as poor Mexicans, African Americans, and whites were not represented in mainstream or what the author defines as "nuclear" churches that consist of the upper class. Instead, these poor communities were highly represented in what the author described as outside churches. His research reveals that both social classes were present within Roman Catholicism, which is identified as more tolerant. The laboring class of the Roman Catholic Church was exclusively Mexican American; it was exposed to what is probably the first sociologically described binary of Mexican American Catholics, as the local parish priest stated that "Many of the Mexicans have devotions in their own homes—they have little altars" and it appears that "they like the trimmings better than the essentials"

(Goldschmidt 1944: 351). With that quotation, this essay becomes one of the first to identify the binary between popular versus institutional religion for Mexican American Catholics; but just as significantly, it is one of the earliest studies to merge class and personal attributes to their belief systems and practices. As poor and marginal members, Mexican Americans are described as deficient and inferior, which in turn is equated to their substandard spiritual beliefs and devotions being open for critique and question as these individuals are outside and lack control of the religious institution.

What appears to be one of the earliest studies in Latin religions within a Protestant tradition is the work of Samuel Maldonado Ortégón (1950), who wrote a dissertation at the University of Southern California (USC) influenced by the theoretical contributions of Emory Bogardus, founder of the USC sociology department. Ortégón sought to measure the economic, doctrinal, educational, and social life of the Mexican Baptists in the United States. The main object of his study was to identify ways that Mexican Baptists might “overcome obstacles to their growth.” Utilizing research methods and measures designed by Bogardus, Ortégón captured historical periods in the evolution of Mexican Baptists in Southern California from 1900 to 1947. The study concludes by identifying economic, theological, and educational factors that have a major influence on the religious thought and practices of Mexican Baptists in the United States. As one of the early studies to examine Mexican American Protestantism, this work emphasized the challenges of acculturation and assimilation and the role of the Baptist Church in facilitating integration into the core culture. It is interesting to note that the binary between institutional and popular religion and the isolationist thesis is not present in this analysis.

### *Origins of the Sociology of Latin Religions*

The 1960s began with more social science research geared toward understanding the role of religion and the church in assisting Latinas and Latinos to become fully integrated within American society. Margaret L. Sumner (1963) published a church study with a focus on the integration of Mexican American Catholics who had converted to Protestantism into North American mainstream society. Her study reveals that those religious communities that were the most integrated were part of a “bicultural church” that was moving in the direction of

the core culture. According to this study, it was the most effective in meeting the needs of church members.

With the landmark publication of *La Raza: Forgotten Americans*, edited by Julian Samora in 1966, which presented a range of essays addressing the unique Mexican American experience, came a passionate examination by John Wagner (1966) of the role of the Christian Church in relation to the Mexican American community. In an edited volume that is set within a North American social context where ethnic awareness, solidarity movements, and issues of social justice were about to take center stage, Wagner's message in this poignant chapter is that the material needs of the Spanish speaking population must be met simultaneously with the spiritual needs of the community. These material needs were identified as health services, educational achievement, employment issues, languages issues, and the creation of indigenous leadership. Supported by data gathered in Bexar County, Texas, Wagner calls upon the Catholic Church to do more for the Spanish speaking. He challenges the American Catholic Church to redefine its understanding of the good Catholics as solely those who are middle income, can send their children to Catholic schools, and are able to support the structures of the parish (1966: 35). This essay would be the first of several research projects that would embrace this particular perspective.

The decade of the 1960s is representative of an acute social consciousness in response to a rapidly changing American society caught up in the Vietnamese War controversy and the Civil Rights movement that framed sociological scholarship concerning Latin religions for a span of over twenty years, from the mid-sixties through the late-eighties. It is within this context that the first studies dealing with the Latin religious experience in the United States would be imagined and documented.

This scholarly narrative would begin with Mexican Americans and Chicanos as members of the Roman Catholic tradition in California and mainly take the form of doctoral dissertations. It was a social context in which people who embraced religion were influenced by all of the social movements for equity and social justice in their midst. It became part of their spiritual and religious personality: it influenced the way they understood the sacred. From the perspective of institutional religion, the mid-sixties represented a post-Vatican II society that had a profound impact as to how people viewed themselves in relationship to the Church, a changing Church that was making itself more open to social transformation. An activist priest from this period, Father Juan Romero, vividly recalls Roman Catholic seminaries actively teaching

and applying the often-neglected Catholic social teachings rather than discussing them in the abstract. Hence, this period represents a historical moment during which such teaching could truly be lived and applied.

Father Romero reflects that he was deeply influenced by *Rerum Novarum* with a focus on capital and labor; *Populorum Progressivo* on the development of the people; and *Quadragesimo Anno* with a focus on the reconstruction of the social order that he actively sought to live and practice in his daily life.<sup>3</sup> Romero and numerous other Catholic clergy during this period had become attracted to the work of Joseph Cardine and the Young Christian Workers Movement (YCWM) where the emphasis was on specialized Catholic Action, which values the dignity and worth of each person. It believes that members should challenge any form of social exclusion and take action by creating and building leadership skills within its membership to bring about change in their home, workplace, and social life. It was this religious orientation coupled with a social context of political activism and social change that brought forth the struggles and vision of César Chávez and the United Farm Workers, Católicos Por La Raza, and activists' religious organizations such as Padres and Las Hermanas. It was this mindset and worldview that formed the context for scholarly writing about the Mexican American and Chicano experience at this time.<sup>4</sup>

*McNamara's Sociology of Religion and the Establishment of the Theoretical Binary*

The year 1968 marked the completion of the first full-length study that set the path for studying Mexican American and Chicano religions for the next twenty years. With his dissertation, Patrick McNamara was the very first scholar to provide research on Latin religiosity from a sociological perspective. McNamara is best known for his research on the Catholic Church in the United States and as one of the first to examine the relationships between the Catholic Church and Mexican Americans. He examined the Mexican American community by incorporating Max Weber's sociological dichotomy between the priest and

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<sup>3</sup> Romero, Juan. Telephone Interview. 22 June 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Numerous Roman Catholic priests in the Southern California region were heavily influenced by the Young Christian Workers Movement such as Fathers Victor Salandini, James Anderson, and Leo Davis (cf. López Pulido 2004).

the prophet. The focus of his research was to challenge Weber's thesis about the prophet; the dissertation argues that prophets can emerge from within the status quo and the institutional church. Keeping in mind the social context within which he was writing, McNamara argued that priests were calling people to the deeper moral and doctrinal heritage of the institutional church by recognizing the importance of the needs and struggle of Mexican Americans and strongly suggests that priests do engage in protest activities. His research reveals patterns of priestly protest in two geographical areas—California and South Texas—where priests began by ministering pastorally to Mexican American migratory agricultural workers and gradually came to take a protesting stance against social injustices they perceived in the entire migratory labor system of the American Southwest.

McNamara did make a distinction between institutional and non-institutional protest. Institutional protest is described as actions taken by bishops or priests who occupy organizational posts within the church. He describes the work of the social action department director in a diocese and contrasts this with non-institutional protest that, in his estimation, is initiated by individual priests acting in a private capacity who are thus vulnerable without the structural insulation enjoyed by institutionally protected clergy. His evidence suggests that charisma is not essential to prophecy, as Weber would have it. The priests and bishops he studied relied instead on deeper religious imperatives contained principally within Catholic social teaching and reinforced in recent years in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Under certain societal conditions, McNamara states that priests may, however, act prophetically outside of the confines and protection of the institution. It is important to underscore that the McNamara model was not necessarily a critique of the church, but instead contextualized the Roman Catholic Church at this specific historical moment as change was in progress. His major contribution was to observe that prophetic work was happening within the confines of the institutional church.

Two years after the completion of his doctoral research McNamara published a foundational article in a volume edited by Joan Moore, Leo Grebler, and Ralph Guzman that was the first comprehensive study of Mexican Americans, entitled *The Mexican American People* (1970). It was there that McNamara established and identified the binary in the sociological study of Latin religions. The binary emerged for a variety of reasons. First, this was a historical moment of protest and the Chi-

cano movement was in full force. Central targets of the movement and its leaders were all dominant institutions, among which the American Catholic Church was included. Major conflicts had been mounted and experienced by the movement leadership, when, for example, *Católicos Por La Raza* directly confronted Archbishop McIntyre at St. Basil Church in Los Angeles. There were numerous arrests, and the Chicano community became angrier and more suspicious. This heavily influenced the early scholars of Chicano religions because they considered the institutional church suspect. McNamara captured this nuance in his work as he reported on efforts by Catholic priests to empower Chicanos. He discussed the clash of perspectives between the policy of assimilation favored by officials of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the policy of preserving separatism favored by some Chicano activists. Early on, McNamara argued that Catholic social thought offered a vision of society that favored human rights and could facilitate democratization in Latin America. Another very important issue during this period was that there was very little Chicano representation within the church in terms of priests and nuns—and no bishops within the hierarchy. Again, this would set forth the institutional analysis of Latino religions in the early scholarship that comprised severe critiques of the Roman Catholic Church as an institution and demonstrated how marginal to this religious institution the Chicano community was.

In this landmark study, McNamara concludes that the role of the Catholic Church in the lives of Mexican Americans has been importantly conditioned by two factors. One is the clergy's prevailing view that these people were uninstructed in the faith and deficient in their adherence to the general norms of church practices. The other was the inadequacy of resources available to the church in the Southwest. McNamara draws on the history of Mexico in relation to the problem of little institutional support from the Catholic Church. The religiosity of Mexicans, especially from the lower classes, is different from the ecclesiastically accepted and sanctioned Catholicism expressed in regular mass attendance, frequent reception of the sacraments, and some articulate knowledge of basic doctrine. Their "folk" Catholicism was combined with pagan indigenous rites, and they were not strongly practicing mass-and-sacrament Catholics. What this meant was that the clergy in the Southwest had to spend an extraordinary amount of effort to fulfill their prescribed role in meeting their obligations to this community, whereas Catholic immigrants in the East found validation

through their churches and accompanying clergy. In the Southwest the church had to reach out to a new clientele, and the fact that there were few resources available made this an overwhelming task.

McNamara discusses the relationship between Mexican Americans and the Catholic Church through a range of historical periods. The first phase is from 1920–1949 and considered the period of pastoral goals that identifies the pastoral care by Catholic priests in relation to the Mexican catholic community. He defines the second phase, from 1949–1967, as the Americanization phase, where there was a massive program of parochial school construction. The idea was to protect Mexican American GIs and their families from subversive forces after the war. School construction involved a public strategy adopted by the Los Angeles archdiocesan leadership; it was (1) to preserve and defend the Catholic faith of the Mexican Americans and their offspring against Protestant influence and later Communism; and (2) to exhibit the church to the larger society as an institution instilling American ideals into the Catholic laity of Mexican background; that is, only under Catholic supervision can Mexicans be made into good loyal Americans.

McNamara's work in *The Mexican American People* provides some of the earliest research done on social action from within the Catholic Church. His work also provides some of the very early survey research on Mexican American religious practices and attitudes. In addition, he also provides some of the earliest research done on Mexican Protestants; he provides denominational statistics and brief histories for Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists in relation to Mexican Americans. McNamara identifies two stages that these three groups go through. Stage 1 is the Missionary Movement, following what McNamara describes as a purely evangelistic approach with such actions as door-to-door Bible distribution, camp meetings and revivals, placing an emphasis on the omnipotence of the Bible and dedication to Americanization through evangelization. Stage 2 is the Segregated Stage, which McNamara describes as activities among the Mexican Americans that are for the most part run by Mexican-Americans themselves. He also offers brief discussions of Pentecostal and Mormon Mexican-Americans.

Probably the most critical contribution that resulted from McNamara's contribution in *The Mexican American People* was the isolationist thesis regarding the Catholic Church in the American Southwest. The idea here was that Mexican and, later, Mexican American Catholics would find themselves in a newly established region of the United States without the guidance and support of a Roman Catholic institutional

leader and priest. The "Padres on horseback" metaphor was underscored in his work to accentuate the lone priest responsible for visiting hundreds of isolated rural settlements of Spanish-speaking Catholics and who received little financial support from an indigent laity. The isolationist thesis constructed by McNamara went beyond religious institutions and acknowledged industries as well, such as agriculture and mining. McNamara also recognized the significance of indigenous religious institutions for Mexican Americans in relation to preserving culture and language.

The *isolationist thesis* that would become popular in studies of Chicanos and the Catholic Church originates in this study. It continually focused on the lack of resources and the weakly structured church that the recently developed American Southwest provides for Mexican American Catholics. He contrasts this with Catholic immigrants from the East accompanied by immigrant clergy who were successful in developing urban organizations equipped with church buildings, schools, and agencies of general charity. He also makes reference to the important role of national parishes for conserving group solidarity within the ethnic tradition for non-English-speaking Catholics. This critique of the American Catholic Church would dominate future studies that examined the role of Chicanos and Mexican Americans in the Catholic Church.

Between 1975 and 1978, three other relevant dissertations, though not completed in sociology departments, were also written about Mexican and Chicano Catholics, and all focused on the region of southern California. Juan Hurtado (1975) provides an attitudinal study, highlighting the social interaction between the Roman Catholic Church and Chicanos taking into account such variables as sex, age, ethnicity, education, income, and religious affiliation. His research concluded that the majority of Spanish speaking groups are close to the church; however Chicanos in particular are farthest from the church and most alienated. His research focuses on the social interaction between the Chicano and the Church and underscores what he claims to be a dissatisfaction or sense of alienation. For Hurtado, Chicanos are those who denote a more militant and activist quality. In his attempt to establish the relationship of distance between the Church and the Chicano he provides us with historical evidence. It is important to note that he draws his conclusion from the work of McNamara, which highlights the limited resources of the churches and clergy in the American Southwest. An important contribution by Hurtado is a highlighting

the emphasis on Americanization by the Catholic hierarchy that was introduced in McNamara's work. It was Hurtado's survey research that identified the social distance between the Roman Catholic Church and its Spanish speaking members. His research reveals that the Chicano view was that the Church activities with respect to the tremendous needs of the people should be returned to the people.—The prevailing view that emerges as a result of this study is that the Church is failing the Spanish speaking, who lack an adequate voice in the decision-making process of the Church. Upon reflection, the Hurtado study continues with the theme of distance and alienation by the Mexican Americans in relation to the Roman Catholic Church. Although his work examines attitudes and does not provide us with an institutional analysis, it accepts and reinforces the prevailing institutional interpretation of the church set forth by McNamara seven years earlier.

Two years later, Sara Murrieta (1977) examined the role of three Roman Catholic Church-affiliated Hispanic organizations in San Diego. The specific focus of study was to identify the significant needs of Hispanic members of these three organizations: Guadalupanas, Cursillistas, and community-based organizations. Murrieta claims that it is important to study these organizations as people expect that they will aid them in meeting their significant needs, while other people question such organizations and are hostile toward them. She concludes that the significant needs of these members were being met through these organizations. She discovers that for the community-based organizations the focus was promoting community and self-awareness. For the Cursillistas, the purpose was to foster religious and social service oriented leadership, and for the Guadalupanas, the focus was to assist in the religious and social work of their parishes. A very important contribution to this study was that it is the first to acknowledge the relevance of the Church Base Community (CEB) for Latinos in the United States. Murrieta's research shows that, as something that originated in Latin America, the CEB was critical in the moral and intellectual development of Latinos. Upon reflection, Murrieta recognizes the richness of these Latino-focused organizations within the Church and concludes that they must be improved and expanded in order to support the multifaceted needs of Latin Roman Catholics. As with most studies during this period, Murrieta recognizes the importance of the institutional Church because her research highlights the needs for these organizations to support Latino Catholics.

That same year, a six-month study was conducted by Gary C. Rye (1977), which investigated the extent to which conflict exists between

Spanish-speaking persons and the Roman Catholic parish. Rye highlighted the cultural conflict between the clergy and parishioners. He claims that this is an important matter to study because it will bring awareness to some of the factors that caused the conflict. This awareness can help us deal with such conflicts more intelligently. His study discovered that Mexican Americans and other Hispanics are often unable to use their own language as a medium of religious expression since the majority of Roman Catholic priests in San Diego were not Spanish speaking. The Spanish-speaking laity is generally committed to cultural maintenance; attempts to impose the dominant culture on them provoke conflict. Major findings of this study were the perceived lack of communication, unavailability of priests when they were needed, insensitivity to the Spanish culture, and lack of orientation to the basic human needs of the people. This continued the theme put forth by McNamara and portrayed a Church that was insensitive and non-responsive to the specific needs of the Spanish speaking community. It also highlighted how the people had to adapt to the institution and not the institution to the people.

About this same time, but in a different part of the country, Joseph Fitzpatrick, S.J. (1971) would inform his scholarship with the work of Will Herberg (1960), Milton Gordon (1964), and Norman Glazer and Patrick Moynihan (1970) in an attempt to explain the religious expressions of Puerto Ricans New York City. Fitzpatrick underscored the important role of religion in providing immigrant communities (congregations or parishes) with a deep and strong sense of social identity, similar to the experiences of other immigrant groups. As a result of this immigrant paradigm, Puerto Ricans are valued within American society in accord with how well they can assimilate and integrate. Hence, the Puerto Rican is understood as different in relation to other immigrant groups and as a result is said to possess feelings of uncertainty within his or her community.

One of the most important contributions put forth by Fitzpatrick's work is the notion of *personalismo* that he identifies within the Puerto Rican and Latin population in general. *Personalismo* is defined as that pattern of close intimate personal relationships characteristic of Latin culture. Individuals perceive their religious life as a network of personal relationships with the sacred. So the meaning of saints, virgins, and saviors within this Roman Catholic world is grounded within the relational and personal. Furthermore, as recognized by McNamara in his study of Mexican Americans, Fitzpatrick (1970: 120) emphasizes that these personal relationships "take place quite outside the organized structures

of the church.” He continues, “indeed, if the organized church should be shut down, the relationship would go on as usual.”

Building on previous scholarship that examined the spiritual care of Puerto Rican migrants, Fitzpatrick is clear as to the significance of acknowledging that religion emerges and must be understood within a specific cultural context.<sup>5</sup> His work is one of the first to recognize the importance of the blending of distinct religious traditions for Puerto Ricans that he identifies as syncretism. Similar to McNamara, he discusses the impact of Protestantism upon a traditionally Roman Catholic community. Finally, he recognizes the importance of the national parish on religion and culture as they provide a link to a group’s religious faith, a strong communal life, and a strong sense of identity. His work is one of the first to point out that Puerto Ricans arrive at the integrated parish after the national parish had been dismantled and its adverse effect on the Puerto Ricans in New York had ended.

*Legitimizing the Dysfunctional Folk: Establishing an Indigenous Perspective*

The first Latino scholar to write about the relationship between Chicanos and the Catholic Church from an indigenous perspective utilizing a sociological framework was a Chicano Roman Catholic priest by the name of Alberto Carrillo (1970), in a critical essay that focused on the sociological failures of the Catholic Church. It is a landmark article because it is one of the first essays to create a space for understanding the Catholic Church from a Chicano perspective. Along with Father Vincent Soriano, Father Carrillo established an inner-city apostolate in the barrios of Tucson, Arizona during the 1960s, where he worked with poor and marginalized Mexican Americans. The focus was on educational issues. It was these lived experiences from active ministries that brought forth his organizing efforts to create a historic Chicano priest organization by the name of PADRES (Priests Associated for Religious, Educational and Social Rights) and granted the lay-Chicano membership of the Church permission to be critical of their institution as articulated in this essay.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> As early as the 1950s, Fitzpatrick (1980) recognized the important and intimate relationship between religion and culture, acknowledging that the practice of one’s religious faith is much more of a cultural matter than we are willing to admit.

<sup>6</sup> A recent publication on the history of PADRES, with rich interview data regarding the work of Father Alberto Carrillo and other important clergy, is the outcome of an

This publication appeared soon after conflicts occurred between *Católicos Por La Raza* and the Roman Catholic Church in southern California and raises questions regarding the legitimacy of institutional Roman Catholicism. With an eye toward examining institutional church structures, Carrillo distinguishes between the Church as a sacred place versus a human organization that is run and organized by human beings. In this sociostructural analysis, the Catholic Church has failed because church leadership lacks racial and ethnic diversity and is insensitive to the cultural and historic contributions of Chicanos, ignores the social problems within these communities, and fails to commit financial resources to the problems within these communities, resulting in marginalized members of this institution. One of Carrillo's most powerful sociological claims is that as members of the institutional church, Mexican Americans are understood by the church within a missionary framework and represent an internal colony in relation to "the majority culture because [Chicanos have] no means of self determination." Carrillo concludes that these issues go beyond the political and social but actually represent a critical moral issue of our time (1970: 82–83).<sup>7</sup>

The year 1978 saw the first dissertation to provide a historical and sociological analysis of Mexican Americans and the American Catholic Church with a focus on Northern California. This groundbreaking research by Antonio R. Soto (1978, 1979) highlights the marginal position of Mexican Americans, both inside and outside the church, from 1848 through the 1970s.<sup>8</sup> Soto's study represents the first comprehensive examination of the Chicano movement in relationship to

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excellent project by Richard Edward Martínez (2005). It represents the new wave of scholarship in Chicano/Latin religion that is noted at the end of this chapter.

<sup>7</sup> As an active member of PADRES, Father Carrillo drew upon his rationale outlined in his 1970 publication to call for a separatist National Chicano Church at the 1971 PADRES National Congress in Los Angeles (see: Martínez 2005: 85–87).

<sup>8</sup> A few years before Soto's study, a very critical historical study on the Catholic Church in South Texas in relation to Mexicans and Chicanos was published by José Roberto Juárez (1974). Utilizing historical records for understanding Chicano-Church relations, it is an indictment of the anti-Mexican sentiments by the newly-arrived foreign Catholic hierarchy toward its native Mexican brethren. It recognizes the isolation thesis first documented by McNamara, and recognizes the tensions between a new foreign church leadership and an indigenous clergy and laity. This essay represents the first essay on religion to appear in *Aztlán*—one of the first scholarly journals with a focus on Chicano Studies. It would be followed by a historic special issue of *Grito Del Sol*, another Chicano-focused scholarly journal, edited by Octavio I. Romano-Vazquez (1979), that would publish the dissertation research of both Soto and Hurtado, among other important scholarly work focusing on Chicanos and religion. The publication

the Roman Catholic Church. He offers great insight into the various plans of action in which members of the Chicano community engaged to bring attention to their plight and puts forth a detailed analysis of the Church that is interpreted as both a sociocultural and sociopolitical system in relation to Mexican Americans. As a result, it examines such things as institutional socialization and social control and the emergence of dominate-subordinate relationships for Mexican Americans within the church.

This historical examination concludes that Chicanos, as members of the Catholic Church, are marginalized. The lack of indigenous leadership within the structures of the church is directly attributed to the Chicanos' subordinate status. The American Church looked upon the Mexican as an object of missionary care as its approach has always been imbued with the error of paternalism. Soto's study is the first to recognize the important role of religion in the lives of Mexican Americans. He argues that religion has provided them with a meaningful view of life and has supported them in the sometimes chaotic conditions of their lives. Consequently, he is the first to bring attention to the important role of popular religion in separating people from the institutional church. He concludes this study calling for a new model of the church that allows for cultural pluralism and a new theology that promotes the indigenization of the ordained and lay ministry. The church should include a flexibility that will provide for a new understanding of the importance of culture and the self-determination of minority groups. He argues that had the church allowed for cultural pluralism in the past the Mexican might have been able to identify with it.

In sum, this is the first comprehensive sociological study that provides an insider's perspective to the Chicano experience in relation to the Catholic Church. As with the past studies, Soto unequivocally concludes that Chicanos are marginalized members of the Catholic Church as a direct result of the historical processes that gave shape to their subordination. It continues with the theme of the tension between the Roman

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year of Juarez's critical essay is also marked by the publication of a history of the Presbyterian Church and Mexican Americans by Brackenridge and García-Treto (1974) that would be reissued in a second edition thirteen years later as a result of its important contribution to the field. In addition, a comprehensive study utilizing survey research on Protestantism in "Hispanic Los Angeles" was published by Clifton L. Holland (1974). It offers a wide-ranging assessment of Latino Protestant communities in Southern California.

Catholic hierarchy and the Chicano community and is the first study to provide a complete analysis of this problem. Along with Carrillo's essay, Soto's work brought scholarly focus and cultural affirmation in relation to popular religion in the Latino community. Numerous subsequent studies would highlight this important contribution and bring attention to popular religion.

The following year, a dissertation on Catholicism and Chicanos was published in the field of political science. The work by Lawrence Mosqueda (1979) sought to analyze the influence of the American Catholic Church on the political ideology and behavior of Chicanos. The Catholic Church is often assumed to be an important influence on the culture of the Chicano community. This study sought to understand a vital, living, changing community and its relationship to an institution that is pervasive in the community—without denying the complexity or vitality of either the people or the institution.

Similar to the Soto study, Mosqueda's work is one of the first interdisciplinary works, because he is trying to understand Chicano political ideology in relationship to Catholic belief by examining the history of Chicanos and Mexicans and the Catholic Church. He also incorporates sociology and religious studies into his work. He provides original research on the period of the Chicano Movement in relationship to the American Catholic Church as he conducted numerous interviews of activists from this period. He concludes that Catholicism is a form of social control because it conditions Chicanos to accept the dominant ideology of the socioeconomic order and limits political options and actions of its followers, though he acknowledges that the church has shown a remarkable ability to adapt to the objective conditions that surround it. Upon reflection, this study is a departure from past studies because of its political focus and interest in the relationship between religion and political ideology in the Chicano community. Mosqueda provides a wealth of historical documentation that identifies the historical lack of support for Chicano Roman Catholics. He underscores the importance of popular religion to describe the unique aspects of the Chicano religious experience. He also provides historical documentation of the failure to provide such support.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The year after the Mosqueda study, a very important anthology, entitled *Prophets Denied Honor*, by Antonio M. Stevens Arroyo appeared (1980). In the spirit of an indigenous voice that legitimates the folk, it is described as an anthology of writings,

A few years later in New York City, the Office of Pastoral Research for the Archdiocese of New York commissioned and published a two-volume study entitled *Hispanics in New York: Religious, Cultural and Social Experiences* (1982). Its purpose was to understand how to use the resources of the Archdiocese to serve better the needs of the Hispanic community. As a comprehensive survey of 1000 Hispanics in the diocese, this study is the first to capture religious practices and beliefs of both Puerto Ricans and Dominicans living there. Volume One reviews the demographics of the participants along with their religious beliefs, practices, and celebrations of their traditions. It examines the respondents' understanding of the sacraments and their relation to the local church. The major conclusion of this study is that the majority of Latinos say that the local parish and school are important to them, although only 33 percent of the sample report that they relate directly to their local church. Regarding the binary, another important conclusion is that both folk religious practices along with institutional religious practices are an essential part of Latinas' and Latinos' religious expression in the New York archdiocese. A general conclusion is that the New York archdiocese can be more responsive in meeting the needs of its Latina and Latino Roman Catholic members. The second volume of this study is comprised of historical and sociological essays focusing on a range of religious expressions, such as popular religion and its historical roots and significance for all Latin groups that comprise the Catholic Archdiocese of New York.<sup>10</sup>

The next doctoral study related to Chicanos and the Church would appear in the late 'eighties and look at the impact of Liberation Theology movements of Latin and American upon Chicano Roman

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documents, speeches, poetry, prayers, and hymns about the "Hispano church." Through the voices that comprise the Latina/o community, *Prophets Denied Honor* represents an important compilation of this unique indigenous perspective of the Christian Church. It represents the first scholarly endeavor to put forth a pan-Latino perspective as it draws links between the Chicano and Puerto Rican experiences in particular. From Padre Martínez to Pedro Albizu Campos, this project underscores how Hispanos in the United States simultaneously affirm their faith and cultural identity.

<sup>10</sup> An important historical study examining the impact of Cuban immigration to Miami in the early 1960s in response to the Cuban Revolution was also published this same year by Michael J. McNally (1982). It describes a church hierarchy that integrates Cuban immigrants along an assimilationist model assigning them to predominantly English-speaking Anglo parishes with the hope that will quickly learn the language and provide service to the diocese (cf. Pérez: 1994a: 194–96).

Catholics in the United States. The work of Gilbert Ramon Cadena (1987) examines the relationship between Chicanos and the Catholic Church and seeks to understand the process of Chicano empowerment within the Church. Four questions frame this study: (1) Can the Catholic Church become a form of empowerment for Chicanos? (2) What is the historical relationship between the Catholic Church and social change for Chicanos? (3) To what extent are priests and bishops influenced by liberation theology? (4) Is a Chicano Latin model or theology developing in the United States today?

This study assumes that religion is a critical element in the process of empowerment for social change. Three methodological approaches are used in this study: a historical analysis of Chicanos and the Catholic Church from 1884 to 1985, a national mail questionnaire of the Chicano clergy, and in-depth interviews with selected priests. The findings suggest that there were two forms of Catholicism for Chicanos, *formal but dependent Catholicism* and a *religiosity based on family traditions*. This study discovers that the majority of Chicano clergy participated in the empowerment process taking place in the church, and they were influenced by the teachings of liberation theology that represent a break in traditional religious hegemony by attempting to replace it with a counter-hegemony of liberation.

A very important contribution of Cadena's scholarship is his liberationist interpretation of Chicanos as members of the American Catholic Church. When placed within a historical context, his research is a testament to the direct influence of Latin American perspectives for understanding and interpreting church and society within the Chicana and Chicano context. It was during this second historical period of Latino Religions that Chicana and Chicano scholars like Cadena had been exposed to Latin American theology and Latin American sociological paradigms of religion.

Consider the creation, soon after in 1972, of the Mexican American Cultural Center (MAAC) in San Antonio, Texas, as a pastoral center where Mexican Americans could learn and explore their ways of knowing and practicing their faith. Among its numerous contributions, MAAC was essential in bringing together the expertise of Latin American scholars and theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, Enrique Dussel, and Sister Carmen Aurora Gómez to teach and affirm Liberation Theologies among Mexican Americans and other Latinos concerned with their presence in the American Catholic Church. It was a perspective that took into account the need to rewrite history from

the vantage point of people whose voices had been historically ignored (Castañeda-Liles 2005: 114–15). In addition, sociological paradigms for understanding religious expression that went beyond Weber and Durkheim were necessary because the existing theories could not speak to the Latin American reality of social conflict. Instead, scholars such as Otto Maduro (1982), whose works had just recently been translated into English, accentuated the importance of Marxist and Gramscian perspectives for situating religion within a social context, bringing forth an understanding of religion as a product of social conflicts. In addition to the emerging scholarship coming out of Chicano Studies, for the first time Chicano scholars of religion could draw from this indigenous or insider's perspective for understanding how religion should be understood.

Another very important contribution of Cadena's work is the coining of the phrase "abuelita theology," which he defines as the maternal transmission of religion from generation to generation. In his estimation, the institutional church attempts to undermine Mexican Catholicism, yet Mexican families have practiced their own faith in a way that was relevant to their lives; the grandmother or mother played a significant role in the passing on of religious traditions. Cadena clearly sees the tension between the institutional church and the Chicano laity and recognizes the insensitivities of the institution toward the Chicano community through his discussions on Americanization and assimilation (1910–1930), of pastoral paternalism (1940–1960), and Chicano church conflicts (1960–1970). He documents this extensively in his historical chapters. In Cadena's estimation it was not until the 1970s that the Catholic Church began to serve as advocate for Chicano concerns, through the national Encuentros, Comunidades de Base, Centers for Latino Ministry, the naming of Bishop Flores, the creation of Padres and Las Hermanas, and the Pastoral Encuentros. He sees this as the hope of the church. He argues that liberation theology is one of the major catalysts supporting this change.

Identical to the rest of the studies, Cadena highlights the neglect of the Chicano community by the Roman Catholic Church. He creatively identifies numerous historical moments by which to understand this and gives a great deal of support to the idea that the 1970s mark a "watershed" where Chicano leadership and Chicano-controlled organizations will change the church from within with support from the teachings of liberation theology—using the phrase "abuelita theology" to understand the power of popular religion in the Chicano community. What makes this study unique is that it provides us with an optimistic

interpretation as to how the Church can serve as tool for liberation and transformation.

The work of Alberto López Pulido (1989) strove to offer part of a larger intellectual vision that seeks to explain and render understandable the marginalization of Chicanos and Mexican Americans as members of the American Catholic Church. As a sociohistorical study on the history of Mexican American Catholics in the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Diego, California, it tends to stress countermyths for understanding the sacred that are said to be independent of the rigid and stagnant expressions of religion reproduced by the institutional church.

What appears to be a major influence emerging out of Chicano and ethnic studies scholarship beginning in the 1970 is a scholarship of tension and conflict. This was inevitable because ethnic scholars during this period were seeking to introduce and create a space for the counternarrative in the academy. What results are binary perspectives between those with power and those who are perceived to be oppressed and marginal in relationship to the dominant society. This binary always points to the failures of the status quo for explaining the challenges faced by the marginalized. Within the context of religion and Latins, this binary exists between the official church and the popular expressions of the people. López Pulido attempts to provide historical documentation of the development of this legacy and of how this tension came into being: the native Mexican church in the Mexican northern frontier is subsumed and relegated to a secondary class where their traditions and perspective are marginalized. He argues that the consequences of these activities are a more solidified community that is collectively experiencing the oppression by the dominant institution bringing forth a marginal community that looks to itself for support and creativity. The argument here is that popular religion flourishes in response to collective marginalization. López Pulido assumes that Chicanos are marginalized within the Catholic Church. He draws from previous studies to confirm this point. He is not interested in engaging in the argument but simply to explain how this community has been marginalized and the impact of that marginalization.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> This period ended in 1990 with the publication of a special double issue—of the *US Catholic Historian* entitled *Hispanic Catholics: Historical Explorations and Cultural Analysis*. It underscores the important role of religion in ethnic history in creating a particular sense of peoplehood and provides a historical and cultural analysis of the pan-ethnic communities that comprise Hispanic Catholics. The scholarly informed binary tension

Before moving into the next historical period of Latino Religions, it is important to recognize that the sociology of Latin religions was being shaped by scholarship outside the discipline. An influential article in this respect was published in *Aztlán*, an international Journal of Chicano Studies, where David Carrasco (1982) examined the classic Chicano novel, *Bless Me, Ultima*, by Rodolfo Anaya. Formally trained in religious studies, Carrasco produced a sophisticated analysis of Anaya's novel as a sacred text that exposed us to the religious dimensions of the Chicano experience. It was a critical work for young Chicana and Chicano scholars during this period because it took seriously a text with origins in the Chicano community where sacred expressions from this community were discovered. This orientation eliminated the binary and instead provided indigenous and community-based signposts. This interdisciplinary shift in sociological scholarship mapped out new ways of knowing and discovering the sociology of the Latin sacred world.

*Beyond the Binary: Interdisciplinary Scholarship in Latin Religions*

Rudy Val Busto's work (1991) represents a major departure from previous studies because it does not address Catholic Church-Chicano relations from a sociological perspective. It represents the beginning of a new wave of interdisciplinary scholarship marking the future of Chicano and Latino religions. The study focuses on a charismatic leader and provides historical as well as textual interpretations. It is the first to be categorized in the emerging area of Chicano/Latino religions and not within the boundaries of sociology. Busto examines the religious aspects and the writings and political activism of Reies López Tijerina.

As one of the leaders in the Chicano movement in the late 1960s, Tijerina was active in New Mexico land grant issues and is remembered for his participation in the 1967 Tierra Amarilla courthouse raid. This study relies upon the interdisciplinary methods of comparative ethnic studies and religious studies. It is unique in that it demands a "toolbox" approach, drawing from religious studies concerns about texts and sources, assumptions about the *sui generis* nature of religion, and how the power of religious conviction is made manifest in the lives of indi-

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between institutional and popular religious traditions as a result of the isolationist thesis discussed at the outset of this chapter resurfaces here in the essay by Wright (1990).

viduals and society. This study reviews the literature on Tijerina over the past 25 years, synthesizes the biographical materials, and sketches Tijerina's life history and the role of Pentecostalism in Tijerina's life. It demonstrates that Tijerina's political life was an extension of his religious life. This study concludes with a unique interpretation of Tijerina's life from a religious studies perspective, finding that Tijerina's life is one of continual revelation, that religious faith is at the core of Tijerina's understanding of the world, and that his exceptional zeal is a witness more to the strength of his faith than to a concern for pleasing his public.

This research is groundbreaking because of its innovative methodological vision and interdisciplinary application. The dissertation was reworked into a book in 2005 and draws critical linkages between religious and ethnic studies as examined in the life of Tijerina. It marks new scholarly inquiry and movement beyond the binary, and instead puts forth the notion of the "vernacular." By utilizing the vernacular, Busto informs us that "religions are released from a comparison with 'official,' 'institutional,' or 'high' religions and can—account for the widest display of human interaction with the sacred even as they might occur under the watchful and suspicious eye of institutions" (2005: 205). Future projects in Latin religious studies have much to learn from this important work.

Without the theoretical sophistication of Busto, but with a recognition that historical studies need to be informed by interdisciplinary scholarship and perspectives, the Notre Dame History of Hispanic Catholics in the United States project produced three volumes that reviewed the histories of Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban Catholics from 1900 to 1965 (Dolan and Hinojosa 1994; Dolan and Vidal 1994; Dolan and Deck 1994). In recognition of the Latino presence in the Roman Catholic Church, the Notre Dame study is the first scholarly project to examine the history of all three major Latino communities in the United States. These histories are recognized within their own unique historical experiences without the benefit of a comparative analysis. Volume three of this project examines key issues and concerns amongst Latin Roman Catholics that cut across nationalities, regions, and generations.

The Program for the Analysis of Religion Among Latinos out of the City University of New York would soon follow by producing a four-volume study that sought to document a systematic study of religion in the experience of people of Latin American descent in the United

States and Puerto Rico (Stevens-Arroyo and Díaz-Stevens 1994; Stevens-Arroyo and Cadena 1995; Stevens-Arroyo and Pérez y Mena 1995; Stevens-Arroyo and Pantoja 1995). It focused specifically on the issues and themes of syncretism, popular religiosity, and cultural identity in relation to Latin sacred expressions. The project was critical because it drew from pan-Latin expressions in relation to various sacred and religious traditions and incorporated interdisciplinary perspectives to inform the sociological interpretations of religion offered in this work. It is useful to note that the first volume of this scholarly project wrestled intellectually with imagining and creating new perspectives for understanding and interpreting “popular religion” in the Latin experience. It provides numerous perspectives on how to interpret this binary in the Latin sacred world.

*Latin Religions of the Borderlands and Transnational Perspectives*

This fourth and final period would move swiftly and intentionally to de-center the sociologically imagined binary for understanding Latino Religions. As an intellectual perspective with its roots located in the prior period represented through the works of Carrasco (1982) and Busto (2005), this final period would bring forward a new interpretive map for understanding the Latin sacred world described here as “borderlands and transnational perspectives” on Latino Religions.

Drawing from religious, cultural, and Chicano studies, the work of Luis D. León (1999, 2004) provides us with a sophisticated reading of the emerging Chicano religions situated in the contemporary borderlands of the United States and Mexico. Spanning the major cities of Mexico City and East Los Angeles, León focuses on the betwixt and between in relation to the crossing of sacred and political borders for examining Guadalupe devotions, *cuaranderismo*, *espiritualismo*, and Pentecostal traditions. León (2004: 5) argues that such traditions were started in and were transformed by, brought to and found, throughout the borderlands as a creative and often effective means for managing the crises of everyday life. Analogous to crossing the border between the United States and Mexico, these expressions can be identified as religious poetics where symbolic and physical borders are crossed to produce variations on religious formations.

This perspective is critical because it dismantles the assumed brackets of Latin religion by situating it within borderless and transnational realities where people practice and express their sacred beliefs. Furthermore

it directs us to the origins of these sacred expressions that point us in the direction of the Mesoamerican sacred world. Scholarly projects with similar theoretical purviews that seek to understand the Latin Pentecostal immigrant experience (Ramirez 1999; Vazquez 1999) and biographies of Latin Pentecostal leaders (Espinosa 1999) are also developed during this same historical period. Other related studies examine the formation of a diasporic nationalism and place among Cuban immigrants at the Miami shrine of Our Lady Charity (Tweed 1997). Finally, the one project that incorporates a sociological analysis for understanding transnational and global religious communities among Latinos is the work of Peggy Levitt (2001, 2002) in her research on Dominican Roman Catholics in Boston, Massachusetts. These scholarly projects vary in the degrees that the betwixt-and-between religious and cultural identities as expressed by León and his religious poetics vision are embraced by their authors. Instead, some work toward a new integrated “whole” without the complexities and contradictions of religious and cultural border crossers and transnational identities.

*Critical Dimensions of Gender and Theology in the Sociology of Latino Religions*

A feminist analysis of Latin religions takes us into a new space beyond the theoretical binary discussed throughout this essay. It de-centers the binary in relation to patriarchal religious institutions and affirms a “matriarchal core” as identified by the sociologist Ana María Díaz-Stevens (1994). It represents a space where Latinas carry on with their own understanding of the sacred as they create an autonomous space for themselves within these institutional arrangements (Medina 2004b: 285). Recent monographs by Lara Medina (2004a) on Chicana and Latina activists in the Catholic Church known as Las Hermanas and Kristy Nabhan-Warren’s (2005) study on the significance on Marian apparitions in a Mexican American barrio in Phoenix, Arizona, challenge and provide us with new and refreshing ways for understanding the theoretical binary of Latin religions. In addition, significant contributions have been made by Latina theologians that again provide a new voice and space grounded in the real life experiences of Latinas. Their work has much to offer the evolving field of Latin religions.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See Aquino et al. 2002; cf. Espin (2000) for a brief historical survey on Latino theology in the United States.

*Recent Scholarship in Latino Religions: A New Beginning?*

As I am writing this chapter, I have in my possession seven new titles in the field of Latin religions that were published since last year, not to mention the recent titles from over the past five years that I have introduced and discussed throughout this essay. They represent scholarly projects that offer new insights into the history of Latin Protestantism (Barton 2006; Martínez 2006); historical studies on Latin Catholics (Badillo 2006; Treviño 2006; Matovina 2005); and new interpretations of the relationship between Latin religions and civic activism and leadership (Espinosa et al. 2005; Hernández et al. 2006). The development and evolution of Latin religious scholarship has taken us into a new area of intellectual complexity and sophistication that will require a further evaluation and study as to the future of Latin religions that takes us beyond the scope of this chapter. However, remembering the perspective first introduced by Rudy Busto, it is clearly evident that the sociological analysis of Latin religions will require that scholars assemble a new tool kit that will capture and account for the interdisciplinary, interethnic, and interdenominational contributions that continue to inform Latin sacred experiences in the United States. Consequently, the future of Latin religious studies is deeply invested in an evolving scholarly project filled with much promise and excitement.<sup>13</sup>

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## CHAPTER NINE

### THE SOCIOLOGY OF NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

E. Burke Rochford, Jr.

New religious movements (NRMs) have been an integral and often controversial part of American history (Foster 1991; Jenkins 2000; Moore 1986). New religions in the American context date to the very beginnings of the republic as various religious groups fled persecution in Europe for religious freedoms in the New World. Others, such as the Oneida Perfectionists, the Mormons, the Seventh-day Adventists, Christian Scientists, and the Jehovah's Witnesses, represent homegrown new religions that emerged in the nineteenth century. The late 1960s and 1970s brought about the most recent round of religious ferment and upheaval, beginning first in the United States before ultimately spreading worldwide (Glock and Bellah 1976). While numerically NRMs in modern Western societies encompass only a few thousand groups with relatively small memberships, they retain considerable cultural significance (Dawson 2004, 2007). This significance extends beyond scholars to the media, watchdog groups, government officials, as well as publics drawn into "cult scares."

The study of NRMs has been a central area in the sociology of religion at least since the mid-1960s, when John Lofland and Rodney Stark (1965) published their seminal article on conversion and Lofland (1966) published his monograph, *Doomsday Cult*, on the beginnings of the Unification Church in the United States. Since that time, thousands of books and articles have been written on NRMs (Bromley 2001). The interdisciplinary journal *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* was founded in 1997 to publish articles on the topic. As this suggests, widespread interest in the cult phenomenon exists among scholars across a range of disciplines. Over the past four decades, research in the field has progressively matured as scholars have tied their analyses to broader theoretical issues within the sociology of religion as well as to discipline of sociology more generally.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> New religion scholars have generally avoided the term "cult," given its pejorative

Marion Goldman (2006: 88–89) argues that widespread interest in NRMs relates to at least five developments. First, NRMs have proliferated and gained increased visibility and public attention. This has been especially true in Europe and Russia in recent years where controversies over NRMs have intensified (Hervieu-Léger 2004; Introvigne 2004; Schoen 2004; Shterin 2004). Second, the globalization of NRMs facilitated in part by the expansion of the Internet has generated both greater knowledge about and interest in cultic groups (Cowan and Hadden 2004; Dawson and Cowan 2004; Hadden and Cowan 2000). Third, NRMs in various ways have become more mainstream as alternative religious ideas and occult themes have been marketed by the media and absorbed within popular culture (Partridge 2004: 53–58). Belief in astrology, UFOs, and reincarnation, for example, are now common in many Western societies. Fourth, the market for texts and collections on NRMs continues to expand as university faculty teach courses on cults and NRMs, or incorporate the topic into classes on deviance, social movements, gender studies, or social problems, as well as the sociology of religion. Finally, the academic standing of new religious studies has grown as the literature has produced agreement on a number of issues central to the development of NRMs and to religion more generally.

This chapter addresses some of the major contributions of new religious studies to theory and research in the sociology of religion. The focus is confined largely to contemporary NRMs in North America and the West, although my discussion at least in part encompasses new religions from other historical periods and geographical locations. Given the extensive literature on NRMs, this review is by necessity selective.<sup>2</sup> The chapter is divided into four major sections. The first identifies the characteristics that define NRMs as distinct religious phenomena.

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use in public discourse. In its place, researchers have substituted the more neutral terminology “new religious movements” or “alternative religions.” The term “new religion” is itself problematic however, given that most groups derive or otherwise borrow from long-established religious traditions (Bromley 2004a: 146; Melton 1987). One scholar (Goldman 2006) has recently urged that the field reclaim the “cult” concept given that its more negative connotations appear to be fading, at least within the American context. Much like other highly stigmatized terms (e.g., “queer”), “cult” has gained a degree of respectability, especially among the young. Such a development is consistent with recent suggestions that the cult phenomenon is undergoing a process of normalization within Western societies (Goldman 2006: 91; Partridge 2004: 51).

<sup>2</sup> For reviews of the literature on new religions, see Bromley 2007a; Bromley and Hadden 1993; Dawson 2006; Lewis 2004; Robbins 1988; for discussions on a wide variety of new religious groups in North American history, see Miller 1995; Gallagher and Ashcraft 2006.

The second considers the significance of NRMs in relation to theories of secularization. The third addresses the trajectory of new religious studies emphasizing the major areas of research in the field. The final section considers the contributions of new religious studies to sociology and its prospects for becoming an established field of study.

### *Defining New Religious Movements*

Efforts to distinguish new religions from other forms of religion have produced ongoing debate. NRMs were initially conceptualized within the prevailing church-denomination-sect-cult framework. New religions were treated as “cults” or “sects.” Despite differences between the two concepts, sociologists of religion have often defined them in overlapping ways. Rodney Stark (1996a: 33), for example, defines a religious cult as “a cohesive spiritual group separate from established religions, in high tension with the surrounding socio-political environment, and requiring great levels of sacrifice and commitment from its members.” Yet many scholars emphasize that cults typically lack clear distinctions between insiders and outsiders, have ill-defined boundaries, belief systems that remain in flux, maintain tolerance toward other religious paths, are individualistic in orientation, exist without specific sources of authority, and are often transitory (Nelson 1968; Richardson 1978a; Robbins 1988: 151; Wallis 1975: 40–41, 1976: 14). Sects by comparison are deviant groups that are more authoritarian, centralized, and organizationally structured than are cults. Like cults, sects reject or are at least indifferent toward mainstream values and norms and often exist in a state of tension with society (Finke and Stark 1992: 41; Johnson 1963; Wallis 1976; Wilson 1990: 46–47). Other characteristics commonly associated with sects include: exclusivity in their commitment demands, identification as an elect or spiritual elite, diffusion of the religious role into all spheres of life, and an emphasis on perfection through direct fellowship with members (McGuire 1997: 143; Rochford 1985: 216; Wallis 1976: 16). Swatos (1981: 19), among others, would argue that Stark’s definition of cults in fact defines sects, for cults become sects when member sacrifice and commitment produce group cohesion and resulting forms of social organization.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Stark and Bainbridge (1985) differentiate three types of cults. The most diffuse and unorganized are *audience cults*. Membership in these groups amounts to consumer activity lacking any basis for member commitment and group cohesion. *Client cults* are

The conceptual confusion between cults and sects has left scholars with no working consensus regarding their meaning (Dawson 2006: 28). This results in part from the fact that religious collectivities are often “mixed types,” encompassing attributes that represent more than one form of religious organization (Iannaccone 1988: S242). At a deeper conceptual level, a number of scholars have rejected the very idea that NRMs fit within traditional frameworks. While some of the analytic insights of the church-sect model have been retained, others have been questioned and rejected (Rochford 2007a). Bromley (2004a: 87), for example, argues that new religious movements “are not fully interpretable within the church-denomination-sect-cult paradigm.”

In recent years, NRM scholars have sought to identify the distinctive features of NRMs (Barker 2004; Bromley 2004a; Melton 2004, 2007; Robbins 2005; Rochford 2007a). Constructing an inclusive definition has proven difficult however because groups identified as new religions differ from country to country and their status is subject to ongoing negotiation. The United Methodist Church, for example, is considered an established church within the United States, but the government in Greece considers it a dangerous cult. Soka Gakkai, widely condemned as a controversial new religion throughout much of the latter portion of the twentieth century in Japan, is now considered part of the religious establishment (Melton 2004: 79). Complicating matters further is the fact that some “older” groups such as the Branch Davidians had their religious status redefined as “cults” in the midst of controversy and violent confrontation (Melton 2004: 74).

Descriptions of the essential character of new religions have clustered around two definitional strategies. The first emphasizes the internal or intrinsic properties that distinguish new religions as religious phenomena. These characteristics are seen as emerging from their *newness* and include first-generational membership, charismatic leadership, high levels of commitment, and susceptibility to rapid organizational change (Barker 2004). The second group of definitions emphasizes the external or relational qualities of new religions. Emphasis is given to the ways

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based on a model that mirrors relationships between therapists and patients or consultants and clients. While those offering the service may become formally organized, little organization exists among clients who avail themselves of services offered. Most clients never become members, although staff working for the organization may (e.g., the Church of Scientology). *Cult movements* are full-fledged religious organizations that attempt to attract and convert members to high levels of commitment and dedication to group goals.

that NRMs are culturally disvalued and stigmatized by both established religious traditions and the broader secular culture, including the government, media, cult-watching groups, and bystander publics.<sup>4</sup>

J. Gordon Melton (2004) defines new religions in terms of their relationship with the dominant faiths. He argues that NRMs are “those religious groups that have been found, from the perspective of the dominant religious community (and in the West that is almost always a form of Christianity), to be not just different, but unacceptably different” (2004: 79). Established traditions thus retain the power to set the boundaries of acceptable religious belief and practice and to label groups that deviate as religious outsiders. Apart from deviant religious beliefs and practices, Melton (2004: 82–83) identifies a number of other “negative characteristics” often used to socially construct new religions. These include high-pressure proselytizing strategies, a deviant sexual ethic, violence, illegal activity, separatism, a communal form of organization, a distinctive diet, apocalyptic beliefs, authoritarian leadership, and conservative views of women’s roles.

David Bromley (2004a: 93) likewise takes a relational approach in defining new religions, but does so from a different angle. He proposes “a continuum of dominant, sectarian, and new religious groups based on *degree of cultural and social alignment*” (my emphasis). Dominant religions, as represented by the established churches, are firmly aligned with mainstream cultural patterns and social institutions. Indeed, dominant religions are constitutive of society and take an active role in its construction and maintenance (Berger 1969; Bromley 2004a: 96–97). Sectarian religions reject the legitimacy and authority of the dominant churches and establish alternative organizations outside the religious mainstream. These groups claim cultural legitimacy as Christian or Jewish, although the established faiths generally find reason to dispute some of their specific beliefs and practices. Sects collectively have widely varying degrees of alignment with societal institutions and normative cultural values. New religions by contrast are not aligned with either dominant cultural patterns or societal institutions, or their claims of being so are rejected by dominant religious and secular institutions. Because of their prophetic character and related anti-structural tendencies, new religions tend toward radical forms of organization. Collectivism often prevails

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<sup>4</sup> I am borrowing this distinction between intrinsic properties and external or relational qualities from Robbins (2005).

organizationally and relationally, especially early on in their development (Bromley 1997; Rochford 2007a). Given their lack of cultural and institutional alignment, NRMs retain ongoing potential for high levels of tension with the prevailing social order (Bromley 2004a: 93–94).<sup>5</sup> Thomas Robbins (2005: 107–08) rejects Bromley’s approach on the grounds of the “persisting colloquial or common-sense meaning of ‘new’” and his agreement with Barker (2004) that new religions share significant characteristics in common. As he says, “It may appear as a confusing anomaly when a group that is not chronologically and organizationally ‘new’ is nevertheless relationally ‘new’ in terms of its lack of connection to dominant institutional and normative patterns.” Robbins concludes that the concept “new religion” should apply only to groups that are organizationally new and “alternative religion” to those that are misaligned and in tension with dominant institutions and cultural patterns. Robbins is quick to acknowledge, however, that most chronologically “new religions” will also be “alternative religions,” and vice versa.

Collectively, these definitional approaches fail to emphasize one essential quality about NRMs: as social movements, new religions are *oppositional* in nature seeking to change if not transform society (Bromley 1997; Bromley and Shupe 1979; Kent 2001a; Rochford 2007a, 2007b). As Dawson (2007) states, “Almost by definition, new religions are dedicated to changing our lives and our societies.” As they act on society in the interests of promoting social change, NRMs inevitably provoke tension and become targets of countermovements, local and national governments, as well as publics concerned by the threat they appear to represent.<sup>6</sup> As the literature amply demonstrates, NRMs have generated

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<sup>5</sup> Jenkins argues that anti-cult opposition in America during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was directed toward fighting heresy. Groups such as Christian Science, the Latter-day Saints, and the Jehovah’s Witnesses were attacked by the mainline traditions because they were viewed as being “theologically wrong” (2000: 46). During the latter portion of the twentieth century by contrast, cults became targets of opposition principally because they challenged secular values and institutions.

<sup>6</sup> Roy Wallis (1984: 20–23), however, argues that NRMs may be “world-affirming” as well as “world-rejecting.” World-affirming movements “possess the means to enable people to unlock their physical, mental and spiritual potential without the need to withdraw from the world.” Groups such as Scientology, Transcendental Meditation, and Nichiren Shoshu motivate their followers in the direction of societal achievement and success. The value orientations of the existing social order thereby are affirmed rather than challenged. While these groups may be new religions, they are not religious *movements*. Moreover, as Wallis concedes, world-affirming new religions lack “most of

controversy worldwide (see Lucas and Robbins 2004 for discussions of the global responses to NRMs).<sup>7</sup>

*New Religious Movements and Secularization Theory*

Widespread scholarly interest in NRMs in one respect remains a curiosity. Despite the impression fostered by the media and various anticult groups, the number and size of contemporary NRMs remains small.<sup>8</sup> Even the most prominent NRMs of the 1960s and 1970s—The Family/Children of God, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), the Unification Church—never grew to more than about 10,000 members, and each has experienced steady declines over the past two decades (Amsterdam 2006; Barker 1995a: 227; Dawson 2006: 179, 2007; Richardson 1993; Rochford 2007b).<sup>9</sup> Moreover, apart from the fact that the Peoples Temple, Branch Davidians, Aum Shinrikyo, Heaven's Gate, and the Order of the Solar Temple have been linked to violence, few have impacted the societies in which they operate (Dawson 2007). Yet sociologists of religion continue to be intrigued by these groups. Why? What is so significant about NRMs that scholars inside and outside the discipline of sociology have subjected them to intensive study?

In the most general sense, the importance of NRMs lies in the fact that they represent “social indicators” (Wallis 1982a) of broader currents

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the features traditionally associated with religion” and are perhaps best considered quasi-religions.

<sup>7</sup> The Anticult movement and other cult-watching groups represent a significant topic in their own right but will not be directly considered here. For discussions of the Anticult movement in North America and elsewhere, see Barker 2002, 2007; Beckford 1985; Bromley 1988a; Lucas and Robbins 2004; Richardson and Introvigne 2007; Shupe and Bromley 1979, 1980; Shupe et al. 2004.

<sup>8</sup> However there are notable exceptions historically. The Latter-day Saints have an estimated four million members worldwide, the Jehovah's Witnesses 1.4 million, the Seventh-day Adventists 670,000, and Christian Science about 214,000 (Jenkins 2000: 185–86).

<sup>9</sup> In the face of deepening decline during the 1980s and 1990s, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) aggressively recruited immigrant Indian-Hindus into its North American temple communities. The movement now has about 50,000 congregational members, the vast majority of whom are Indian-Hindu immigrants and their families (Rochford 2007b). The number of Western Americans remaining actively involved has declined sharply over the past two decades. In 2000, only about 750–900 devotees continued to reside in ISKCON's communities in the United States (Squarcini and Fizzotti 2004: 70).

of change within contemporary society. In particular, the growth of new religions counters longstanding theories that made claims to the effect that “religious beliefs, practices, and symbols are gradually being abandoned at all levels of modern society” (Partridge 2004: 40). Following Peter Berger’s classic statement of secularization, sociologists of religion largely accepted that modernity results in “the disenchantment of the world” as suggested by Max Weber. Institutional differentiation, pluralism, functional rationality, and privatization all combine to reduce the significance of religion within society as a whole. As Berger (1969: 107–8) states in the *Sacred Canopy*, secularization “affects the totality of cultural life and ideation. . . . Put simply, this means that the modern West has produced an increasing number of individuals who look upon the world and their own lives without the benefit of religious interpretations.” In effect, modernity drives spiritual mystery from the contemporary world, stripping religion of its significance and legitimacy.

The proliferation of new and alternative forms of spirituality during the 1960s and 1970s constituted “evidence” that challenged the adequacy of secularization theory (Hadden 1987: 603–5). Although most sociologists of religion agree that disenchantment accompanied the development of modern Western societies, these new forms of religious life underscored the resistance of religion and its overall centrality to human life. The presence of a wide variety of new religions indicated that “cracks [were] appearing in the disenchanted landscape” (Partridge 2004: 40).<sup>10</sup> Revitalization and re-enchantment were appearing even as the dominant traditions were undergoing internal secularization and were losing their standing within society. Such a pattern of religious evolution is consistent with Stark and Bainbridge’s (1985: 121) argument that secularization is a self-limiting process; as established religions lose their vitality and authority, new forms of religion follow in their wake (cf. Finke and Stark 1992).

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<sup>10</sup> Bryan Wilson (1976) and Steve Bruce (1996, 2000), however, argue the opposite. NRMs are further expressions of secularization rather than signs of revitalization. Both authors contend that NRMs represent little more than “trivial” remnants of their dying predecessors.

*The Research Trajectory*

Contemporary studies of NRMs have expanded our empirical and theoretical understanding around a number of issues central to the study of religion. Yet research has followed a distinctive trajectory: it has been shaped by the fact that an interdisciplinary network of scholars has studied contemporary new religions *in the process of their development* (Bromley 2004a: 83). Of equal importance is that political as well as intellectual considerations have shaped the literature (Zablocki and Robbins 2001). Political polarization has divided scholars into two opposing camps between those believing that NRMs have been unfairly maligned and others who view them as posing a threat to their members as well as to society in general. This “political imbroglio,” as Bromley (2001) calls it, has shaped the literature in significant respects.<sup>11</sup> Most important, a disproportionate amount of research has focused on questions of affiliation and disaffiliation (recruitment, conversion, defection) in an effort to refute “brainwashing” explanations favored by critics (see Conway and Siegelman 1978; Clark et al., 1981; Enroth 1985; Hassan 1988; Kent 2001b; Singer 1995; Zablocki 1997, 1998, 2001). In other cases, controversial issues such as abuse and corruption have received less research scrutiny (see Jacobs 1989, 2006; Kent 2001b; Rochford 1985, 1998, 2007b; Rochford and Bailey 2006; Rochford and Heinlein 1998).

Research on NRMs over the past four decades can be grouped loosely into three major topical trends. The initial wave of studies addressed the origins and growth of NRMs during the 1960s and 1970s. An abundance of written works focused on how and why young people

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<sup>11</sup> Because new religion scholars have favored participant observation in their research, they have been well positioned to track emerging trends within contemporary NRMs. This close involvement has yielded “thick descriptions” (Geertz 1973), but also accusations that NRM researchers are “cult apologists” whose work is one-sided and biased. Such claims have surfaced even within academic circles (Balch and Landon 1999; Beit-Hallahmi 2001; Reader 2004; Zablocki and Robbins 2001). Ian Reader (2004: 199), for example, writes the following about the American scholars who visited Japan following Aum Shinrikyo’s sarin gas attacks in Tokyo in 1995: “[A] small group of American scholars visited Japan shortly after the subway attack (and at Aum’s invitation) because they were concerned about possible human rights violations against Aum. While their motives were sincere, their actions reflected a tacit assumption prevalent among many scholars that NRMs accused of atrocities are normally innocent.” For discussions of the research dilemmas faced by NRM scholars, see Bromley 2007b; Bromley and Carter 2001.

were joining and converting to various NRMs. When it became apparent that most who joined were leaving, research grew to include the process of disaffiliation. The second wave of studies began in the late 1970s and 1980s as the major NRMs were experiencing numerical losses, leadership controversies, economic decline, and a rapid growth of families. Research shifted to consider issues of movement change, including the decline and transformation of NRMs. A third round of studies emerged in the 1990s in response to episodes of collective violence involving a limited number of religious groups.

### *The Origins of NRMs*

In *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*, H. Lawrence Moore (1985: x) argues that religious outsiders have played a significant role in the making of American religious history:

It is impossible to locate a period of American history when so-called small sects were not growing at a faster clip than denominations then viewed as large and stable. . . . Yet dozens of recent books and an almost endless amount of journalistic commentary, much of it based on the work of very able sociologists, have assumed that sects and cults . . . began to affect religious life in this country only around 1960.

Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 234–62; Stark et al., 1979, 1981) also found “amazing stability in cult activity over the 40 years between the 1920s and 1970s” in their analyses of United States census data (Stark et al., 1981: 137).

Scholars would agree that NRMs have emerged consistently over time, but most also acknowledge that they tend to swell numerically during periods of social dislocation and societal change (Rochford 2007a). The 1960s and 1970s represent only the most recent outbreak of new religions during a period of social turbulence (Foster 1991; Jenkins 2000). Of the approximately 2,000 religious groups operating in the United States, at least half came into existence after 1960. More recently these have been joined by a significant number of quasi-religious “New Age” and “religiotherapy” groups (Melton 1998; Robbins and Hall 2007). While some scholars have emphasized cultural crisis and breakdown as the context giving rise to the ‘sixties new religions, others have given greater weight to individual searching and the quest to overcome moral ambiguity and uncertainty.

A number of scholars argue that NRMs are a response to the conditions of modernity (Dawson 2004, 2007). James Hunter (1981: 7)

claims that new religions are forms of “protest against modernity” and symptomatic of the strains, anomie, and alienation that characterize contemporary life: “As a demodernizing movement, the new religions are a sign that in some sectors of modern society, strains of modernity have reached the limits of human tolerance, and are thus symbolic, at both the collective and the social-psychological levels, of the desire for relief and assuagement.” Along somewhat similar lines, Tom Robbins contends that NRMs serve a therapeutic purpose because they represent mediating structures offering opportunities for close face-to-face relationships between people who share a sense of belonging based upon unifying religious beliefs. In modern society, traditional mediating structures between the individual and established institutions, such as the family, the neighborhood, personal work settings, or conventional churches, have eroded under the weight of “social changes involving increased geographical mobility, [and] bureaucratization of instrumental structures” (1981: 215). NRMs thus provide individuals with a means to manage the tensions and disruptions associated with widespread rationalization, bureaucratization, and the deinstitutionalization of the private sphere (cf. Anthony and Robbins 1981; Burfoot 1983; Dawson 2004, 2007; Robbins 1988: 24–62).

These and related ideas were employed by sociologists to account for the rise of new religions in the United States during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Robert Bellah (1976: 333) argues that this was an era where the “horrors of modern history” produced “mass disaffection from the common understanding of American culture and society” that led to an erosion in the legitimacy of American institutions. A “crisis of meaning” perspective was advanced by Bellah and by his student Steven Tipton in his monograph, *Getting Saved from the Sixties*, who wrote that conversion to NRMs fundamentally represented an effort by ’sixties youth “to make moral sense of their lives” (1982: 185) in a society where moral boundaries were indistinct and fluctuating (Anthony and Robbins 1982).<sup>12</sup> In rejecting the prevailing utilitarian culture that celebrated money, power, and materialism in search of intimacy and

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<sup>12</sup> Taking a different view, Stephen Kent (2001a: 36) contends that frustration and despair about the perceived failure of “the revolution” provided “the key to the rapid transformation of slogan chanters of the 1960s into the mantra chanters of the early 1970s.” A “crisis of *means*,” rather than of meaning, led some activists to refocus their discontent away from political and structural change toward individual transformation.

self-awareness, some 'sixties youth were drawn to alternative spiritual paths and ways of life.

Robbins and Bromley (1992, 1993) build on these ideas. Rather than focusing so strongly on NRMs as responses to the structural ambiguities and dilemmas of modernity, they emphasize that NRMs are "laboratories of social experimentation." Emerging in "unsettled times" (Swidler 1986), new religions constitute "movement havens" (Fantasia and Hirsch 1995) where dominant cultural models can be challenged and reworked. Freed from hegemonic cultural forms, NRMs provide "free spaces" for social experimentation and cultural innovation.<sup>13</sup> Experimentation has taken both progressive and traditionalist forms, and thus NRMs are not strictly anti-modern. In some cases, NRMs have embraced both progressive and traditionalist forms, simultaneously practicing traditionalist sexual relations, for example, while making use of modern forms of technology, such as seen in ISKCON. Most central to Robbins and Bromley's (1992, 1993) argument is that NRMs represent "free spaces" that allow members to experiment with alternative forms of sexuality, gender relations, healing and therapy, economic production, as well as alternative forms of social organization. NRMs therefore can be seen as "free-floating cultural resource[s]" existing on the cutting-edge of social change (Robbins and Bromley 1993: 210; Dawson 2007).

### *Joining, Converting, and Defecting from NRMs*

Issues of recruitment and conversion largely defined the research agenda of scholars during the formative stages of NRMs. Evidence of this trend is indicated by the fact that 40% of the entrees appearing in Beckford and Richardson's (1983) comprehensive bibliography on NRMs addressed issues related to conversion (Snow and Machalek 1984: 167–68). Bromley (2001) likewise concludes that of the many thousands of written works on NRMs the issue of affiliation (recruitment and conversion) has gained the most attention. As the NRMs became more established however, defection took center stage when it

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<sup>13</sup> Fantasia and Hirsch (1995: 158) argue that cultural change and transformation *within* existing social movements depends on two developments. First, internal social conflict must reach a level of intensity to push participants outside their normal daily routines. Secondly, "free spaces" or "havens" must be available that allow for the collective renegotiation of a movement's existing culture. For an application of these ideas to changes in the religious culture of ISKCON, see Rochford 2007b.

became apparent that the majority of those joining were leaving within short periods of time.

Opponents have argued forcefully that NRMs have employed strategies of “forced conversion” or “brainwashing” to gain members (Robbins 1988: 63). As Enroth (1985: 141) states, brainwashing involves “the impairment of the individual’s cognitive and social functioning” resulting from “intense indoctrination pressures which include the manipulation of commitment mechanisms so that new recruits assume a posture of rigid loyalty and unquestioning obedience to the leadership.” Most scholars have rejected brainwashing, considering it an evaluative and politically motivated concept rather than one based in scientific principles and research (Anthony and Robbins 2004; Barker 1984; Dawson 2006; Richardson 1993; Robbins and Anthony 1982; Rochford et al. 1989). Barker’s (1984) carefully crafted study of recruitment to the Unification Church in Britain provides the most comprehensive and compelling critique of brainwashing. Professional associations such as the American Psychological Association, the American Sociological Association, and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion have submitted *amicus curiae* briefs challenging the scientific basis of brainwashing, and United States courts have largely dismissed its credibility in legal proceedings (Anthony and Robbins 2004: 271).

Recently, however, the brainwashing thesis has been revived and reworked by two sociologists of religion (Kent 2001b; Zablocki 1997, 1998, 2001). These authors contend that brainwashing influences occur only *after* a person has committed themselves to a new religious group. As Stephen Kent (2001b: 365) argues, “No longer are the advocates of the brainwashing term using it to explain conversions, as some persons attempted to do in the 1970s and early 1980s. Now its proponents see it as efforts by some controversial religions to *retain* members whom leadership fears are deviating or drifting away.”<sup>14</sup> Despite the general skepticism of scholars toward the brainwashing thesis, most would acknowledge that some NRMs at times have been characterized by authoritarian and corrupt leaders, overly zealous followers, and the abusive treatment of adults and children (Barker 1984; Carter 1990; Jacobs 1984, 1987, 1989, 2007; Kent 2001b; Rochford 1998, 2007b; Rochford and Bailey 2006; Rochford and Heinlein 1998). Yet, at its

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<sup>14</sup> For critiques of this approach, see Anthony 2001; Anthony and Robbins 2004: 272–82; Bromley 1998; Dawson 2001, 2006: 103–24.

core, the debate over brainwashing remains a “clash of perspectives rooted in irreconcilable political differences” (Dawson 2006: 121).

In contrast to brainwashing explanations that reduce members to passive victims, most sociologists of NRMs consider recruitment and conversion as forms of socialization (Downton 1979; Greil and Rudy 1984; Lofland and Stark 1965; Long and Hadden 1993; Richardson et al., 1979; Snow and Phillips 1980). Such an approach recognizes that membership and conversion are social accomplishments involving shifting commitments and ongoing struggles of identity (see, e.g., Devi’s story in Rochford 1985: 87–122). It also acknowledges that becoming a member of a new religious group may or may not involve significant changes in attitude, identity, and worldview, and that the majority of people recruited never officially join (Barker 1983, 1984; Galanter 1999).

The most influential treatment of religious conversion remains Lofland and Stark’s (1965) “world-saver” model. It is a value-added model derived from a study of the early American converts to the Unification Church. Seven sequential stages—divided between predisposing and situational factors—provide the basis for neophyte members reaching a state of full-commitment and a transformed identity and worldview. Researchers have used the Lofland-Stark conversion model largely for illustrative purposes in studies of the Hare Krishna (Judah 1974), the Divine Light Mission (Downton 1980), the “Christ Communal Organization” (Richardson et al. 1979), and a UFO group (Balch and Taylor 1978), among others (see Greil and Rudy 1984). Few researchers however have subjected the model to rigorous empirical testing. One such effort was undertaken by David Snow and Cynthia Phillips (1980) in their analysis of conversion to Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism; they found that only two elements of the model—cult affective bonds and intensive interaction within the group—were essential to the conversion process. The neutralization of extra-cult bonds has also been identified as critical for conversion to highly deviant, exclusive, and communally organized religious groups and movements (Greil and Rudy 1984: 16; Snow and Phillips 1980: 442).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For comprehensive overviews of research on conversion, see Dawson 2006: 76–82; Machalek and Snow 1993; Rambo 1993; Robbins 1988: 63–99; Snow and Machalek 1984. Greil and Rudy (1984) evaluated ten empirical studies that used the Lofland and Stark model; they found that most of the studies reported high levels of pre-recruitment tensions, but they questioned the extent to which this distinguished

NRMs have experienced elevated rates of voluntary defection, especially among high-demand groups (Barker 1983, 1984; Bird and Reimer 1982; Galanter 1999; Jacobs 1989; Levine 1984; Rochford 1985, 2007b; Rochford et al., 1989; Wright 1984, 1987). One study found that 90% of those who join NRMs defect within two years (Levine 1984: 15). Rochford, Purvis, and Eastman (1989: 73) found that over half (55%) of Hare Krishna members who took initiation from ISKCON's founder and guru between 1974 and 1976 defected within a one-year period. Such high rates of turnover challenge anticult claims that extraordinary means such as deprogramming are required if people are to leave NRMs, although many hundreds of people have been forcefully deprogrammed. Bromley (1988a), for example, identified 396 cases of deprogramming of Unification Church members alone between 1973 and 1986. A number of studies have suggested that those forcibly removed from their group, or who otherwise had substantial contact with the Anticult movement upon leaving, were likely to invoke brainwashing as an explanation for their participation (Anthony and Robbins 2004: 264; Barker 1988; Shupe and Bromley 1980; Solomon 1981).

Studies of disengagement from new religions have largely treated defection as an individual experience involving a breakdown in the ideological and cognitive linkage between a convert's values and beliefs and the religious doctrines and practices of the group. Defection thus entails a process of "falling from the faith" (Bromley 1988b) or is an outcome of dissonance leading to "deconversion" (Jacobs 1984, 1987, 1989; Skonovd 1983; Wright 1983, 1984). Yet as new religions developed, internal conflict and factionalism emerged resulting in mass expulsion, group defection, and schism (Balch 1988; Chancellor 2000; Ofshe 1980; Rochford 1989, 1998, 2007b; Rochford and Bailey 2006; Wallis 1976; Wright 1988). These collective forms of disaffiliation have in some cases placed a group's survival at risk, as membership loss is

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between converts and non-converts (also see Snow and Phillips 1980). With respect to a religious problem-solving perspective, all but one of the studies reviewed reported that converts were predisposed toward a religious framework prior to encountering the group they joined. Six of the ten studies found evidence of religious seekership preceding conversion. All but one reported that respondents made contact with their group during a turning point in their lives. Eight of ten studies found that affective bonds with other members were significant to the conversion process. Six studies suggested the importance of limiting extra-cult affective ties, and all ten emphasized the need for intensive interaction if conversion is to occur.

often associated with economic decline (Chancellor 2000; Rochford 2007b; Rochford and Bailey 2006; Wright 1988: 157). Moreover, one study found that resources played a critical role in whether group defection would lead to the formation of schismatic groups (Rochford 1989). Despite the significance of collective forms of disengagement, theory and research has focused more extensively on individual defection.

Individuals involved in NRMs over an extended period of time defect for a number of reasons that include a disruption or breakdown in internal sources of solidarity (Bromley 2004b, Jacobs 1989; Wright 1987); leadership malfeasance (Bromley 2004b: 301–302; Carter 1990; Chancellor 2000; Goldman 1999; Jacobs 1984, 1987, 1989; Rochford 1985, 1989, 1998, 2007b; Rochford and Bailey 2006; Wright 1987); and a range of organizational problems involving issues as diverse as failed prophecy (Bromley 2004b: 302), economic problems (Rochford 1985, 2007b; Rochford and Bailey 2006), member perceptions that movement goals are unlikely to be achieved (Rochford 1985; Wright 1987), and revelations of child mistreatment and abuse (Chancellor 2000; Rochford and Heinlein 1998). Although defection may occur suddenly as a result of “triggering episodes” that disrupt a person’s taken-for-granted assumptions and/or existing social relations (Wright 2007), it more often involves methodical planning whereby individuals develop “strategies of leave-taking” (Skonovd 1981; Wright 1987). In at least some cases however, defection may be a spur of the moment decision without obvious causes (Beckford 1985: 159; Rochford 1985: 108).

As detailed by Bromley (2004b: 303), defection from NRMs normally involves several stages:

Individual disinvolvement, during which the member harbors but does not publicly express growing disaffection; organizational disinvolvement, which involves more public expression of disaffection and some open tension between member and movement; a precipitating event or series of events which make it clear to the member and/or movement that conflicts are unlikely to be resolved; separation, the point when an individual crosses the boundary from member to former member; and post disaffiliation readjustment.

Apart from becoming “ex-members,” some disgruntled and/or disenfranchised members have chosen instead to move to the margins of their respective religious organization, in some cases forming separate enclave communities (Amsterdam 2006; Barker 1998; Goldman 1999; Rochford 1989, 2007b). Such a strategy is likely when longtime mem-

bers remain committed to their religious beliefs and practices and to relationships with other followers. One study on disaffiliation suggests that ex-members sometimes “re-member” with their former religious group in cases where they fail to reintegrate with the conventional society (Rochford 1991). Other researchers have noted that joining, leaving, and becoming part of another new religious group constitutes a conversion career for some religious seekers (Richardson 1978b).

The literatures on affiliation and disaffiliation have suffered from a number of conceptual problems and related misunderstandings. Some researchers have noted the tendency to confuse conversion and recruitment (Balch 1985; Greil and Rudy 1984; Snow and Machalek 1984). In other instances, researchers have equated defection with “deconversion” (Jacobs 1984, 1987). Yet, as noted above, at least some longtime members remain faithful to their religious commitments even after leaving their religious group. Although recruitment and defection clearly represent significant role transitions (Bromley and Shupe 1986) they cannot be taken as indicators of shifts in belief structure, for recruitment and defection are fundamentally matters of affiliation. On the other hand, conversion and deconversion represent transformations in a person’s worldview or “root reality” (Heirich 1977: 674). Such conceptual confusion might be overcome if research moved toward an integrated theory of the entire affiliation-disaffiliation process (Bromley 2004b: 306).

### *Change and Transformation of NRMs*

An important if underdeveloped topic in the study of new religions is the factors that influence their development over time (Barker 1995b; Bromley and Hammond 1987; Rochford 2007a, 2007b; Stark 1996b; Wilson 1987). Such an oversight is especially conspicuous because new religions are prone to rapid and dramatic changes that promote organizational transformation (Barker 2004). Scholars have pursued two different approaches with respect to the development of new religions. The first seeks to identify and analyze the factors that influence their success, decline, and failure (Bromley and Hammond 1987; Rochford and Bailey 2006; Stark 1987, 1996b; Wilson 1987). Stark (1987, 1996b) has formulated the most comprehensive model addressing success and failure in religious movements. Despite being cited routinely in the literature however, the model has received little in the way of empirical

investigation (Stark 1996b: 133).<sup>16</sup> The second approach focuses less on specific organizational outcomes in favor of describing social processes that promote accommodation between NRMs and their host societies. Consideration is given to how radical religious protest comes to be tamed and perhaps transformed (Rochford 2007a).

While NRMs can be seen as responses to modernity and its secularizing influences, they are inevitably subject to these very forces, for as Wallis (1984: 5) notes, “world-rejecting” NRMs are likely to succumb to world-accommodation owing to a variety of internal and external pressures. Such a shift mirrors the “sect-to-church” transition detailed by Ernst Troeltsch (1931) and elaborated on by numerous scholars of religion (see e.g., Finke and Stark 1992; Iannaccone 1988; Johnson 1963; Mauss 1994; Niebuhr 1929; Rochford 1985: 214–220, 2007b; Stark and Bainbridge 1985; Wilson 1990). Mauss (1994: 5) summarizes the predicament faced by a new religious movement:

If it has survived for some time as a “peculiar people” (in the biblical phrase), conspicuously rejecting the surrounding society and flexing the muscles of militancy, then it will begin to face the predicament of disrepute, which invites repression and threatens not only the movement’s success but also its very existence. In dealing with the predicament of disrepute, the movement typically begins to modify its posture to adapt selectively those traits from the surrounding culture that will make it more acceptable to the host society.

NRMs thus face the delicate task of maintaining an optimum (medium) level of tension with the dominant society if they are to avoid either repression or accommodation, both of which threaten their growth and survival (Finke and Stark 1992; Johnson 1963; Mauss 1994; Stark and Bainbridge 1985; Stark 1996b; Wilson 1990). As one might expect, finding the right balance has proved a difficult proposition, especially in light of organized anticult mobilization intended to elevate public concern about NRMs. As James Richardson (1999; cf. Richardson and

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<sup>16</sup> Stark (1996b: 133) complains that his model of success and failure has not influenced the case study literature. Empirical testing of Stark’s model and the ten propositions that comprise it are perhaps best suited to comparative-historical research, for many elements of the model remain ongoing issues for contemporary NRMs. Some researchers, however, have explored specific elements of the model with respect to one or more contemporary new religions (Barker 1995b; Bromley and Hammond 1987; Dawson 2002; Palmer and Hardman 1999; Rochford 1998; 2007b; Rochford and Bailey 2006).

Introvigne 2007) contends, anticultists have gone from creating “moral panic” on the basis of brainwashing claims to alleging widespread child abuse among new religious groups.

Having collective goals that are oppositional to society, new religions are inherently fragile and unstable enterprises. To endure they face the task of building alternative religious worlds in which members can live their everyday lives. This requires oppositional religious cultures supportive of alternative religious beliefs, practices, and ways of life (Rochford 2007b). As Stark (1996b: 137) contends, “In order to grow, a religious movement must offer a religious culture that sets it apart from the general, secular culture.” Religious cultures promote individual identity and group solidarity while simultaneously establishing group boundaries meant to separate the faithful from the contaminating influences of the outside world (Rochford 2007b).

Religious beliefs and the behaviors that grow from them rest upon a foundation of social institutions (Rochford 2007b). Institutions are unyielding structures that both impose constraints on and provide opportunities for individuals. Individuals act in culturally uniform ways because they face the same institutional hurdles (Swidler 1995: 36). Political and economic institutions as well as marriage, family, and education, all represent normatively based structures that form the basis of social order. Yet each of the major NRMs that gained prominence in the 1960s and 1970s have labored to create institutional structures capable of sustaining members within a communal context (Rochford 2007a). Because of this, they have faced the inevitable pulls toward accommodation with conventional society. Stark’s model of success and failure highlights two institutional issues that have proven critical to the development of contemporary NRMs: Legitimate authority and fate of charismatic leadership, and the second generation and family life.

#### *Leader Authority and the Fate of Charisma*

Charismatic authority has been central to the emergence and development of NRMs. A number of sociologists have explored the ways that charismatic leadership is socially constructed, how it is furthered or lost, its role in collective violence, and the consequences associated with the death of a charismatic founder (Carter 1990; Chancellor 2000; Dawson 2002; Goldman 1999, 2005; Miller 1991; Palmer 1988, 2004; Rochford 1985, 1998, 2007b; Rochford and Bailey 2006; Wallis 1982b, 1984). Charismatic leaders face the ongoing task of sustaining

their legitimacy in collaboration with followers. Charisma thus grows out of social interaction between leaders and those who attribute charisma to them (Dawson 2002, 2006: 153). More broadly, leader authority maintains legitimacy to the extent that rank and file members perceive themselves as active participants in the system of authority to which they are subject (Stark 1996b: 139–140). Charismatic authority produces a relationship of high emotional intensity. At the group level, this readily translates into high levels of organizational commitment, religiosity, and task performance as followers seek to realize the goals of the leadership and its organization (Dawson 2002: 82). Yet as Weber has argued, charismatic authority exists only in the early stages of religious movements because it is too unstable to be sustained over time. Charismatic authority therefore must either become institutionalized or risk implosion (Dawson 2002: 85). In general, NRMs have experienced a shift in leadership and types of authority toward more traditional and rational forms (Barker 1995b: 171–172).

The effort to carry forward successfully the mission of a charismatic leader inevitably leads to pressures for more stable and even bureaucratic forms of organization, if only to counter the spontaneous *ad hoc* quality of charismatic authority (Wallis 1984: 108–110). The need for coordinated action requires specialists who can develop strategies, supervise followers, and delegate tasks essential to the success of the group. Growth also places limits on the ability of charismatic leaders to maintain their previous levels of personal contact with followers (Dawson 2002: 86). Moreover, as members become more invested in the group they tend to seek institutional structures that afford greater predictability and stability. This is especially true as members grow older, have families, and require greater security in their lives. Richardson (1994: 30) refers to this as a process of “domestication.”

To deflect pressures toward institutionalization, charismatic leaders have employed a number of counteractive strategies. Lorne Dawson (2002) identifies six such strategies: (1) to keep followers focused on the words and goals of a charismatic founder, the leader may suddenly shift or give different emphasis to doctrines and policies; (2) leaders may increase demands on members for sacrifice, thus affirming their authority; (3) they may promote fears of persecution by creating new and threatening enemies in order to create a sense of crisis among followers; (4) those supporting institutionalization may be ridiculed, marginalized, or even ousted from the group; (5) loyalty tests may be used in an effort to strengthen emotional ties and dependency on the

leader; and (6) charismatic leaders may relocate their group in an effort to consolidate control and undermine possibilities for routinization.<sup>17</sup>

Although resistance to routinization is common among charismatic leaders, other adaptations have also been noted by Wallis (1984: 110–13). *Acquiescence* occurs when a leader accepts a shift from being “superhuman” in the eyes of followers to a more human-like status (e.g., Guru Maharaj Ji of the Divine Light Mission). *Encouragement* of institutionalization occurs when leaders actively direct the process of routinization but do so for their own advantage (e.g., L. Ron Hubbard sought to assert absolute authority within Scientology by establishing an elaborate hierarchical structure under his control). *Displacement* takes place when institutionalization unfolds without the full recognition of the leader (e.g., Robert de Grimston, the leader of the satanic group known as The Process, was caught off-guard when the group began adopting more conventional patterns; he was ultimately ousted). In her analysis of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, Susan Palmer (1988) identified *abdication* as yet another potential response to institutionalization; Bhagwan renounced his guru status shortly before being forced out of the United States in 1985 by immigration officials; his international communities disbanded thereafter.

A major development in the life of any religious movement emerges at the death of a revered charismatic leader. Some religious groups fade away with such a passing (Kanter 1972: 118; Miller 1991). Most, however, survive with only moderate disruption, especially when prior preparation affords a smooth transfer of power (Melton 1991: 9–10). Among the more established new religions, Scientology, The Family/Children of God, Transcendental Meditation, ISKCON, the Rajneesh Foundation International/Osho, and Siddha Yoga Dham, have all experienced the death of their charismatic founders. Only ISKCON has experienced intense and ongoing struggles over religious and political authority following the death of its founder in 1977. One reason is that guru authority is hostile to effective organization since disciples are committed primarily to their gurus, rather than to an established organization (Rochford 1985: 221–55, 1998). Challenges to the religious authority of ISKCON’s leadership have led to individual and group defection, organizational switching, and schism (see Rochford 1985,

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<sup>17</sup> For illustrations of each of these strategies, see Dawson 2002, 2006: 156–60; Rochford 2007a.

1989, 1999, 2007b; Rochford and Bailey 2006). It has also resulted in the emergence of pro-change groups (e.g., a women's movement) challenging ISKCON's traditionalist religious culture (Rochford 2007b).

### *The Second Generation and Family Life*

Family life has played a central role in the development of religious communities and institutions (Berger 1969: 133; Foster 1991; Kanter 1972: 86–92; Niebuhr 1929; Rochford 1997, 2007b; Stark 1996b). Dobbelaere (1987: 116) underscores this fact when he argues that “the family allows us to now analyze empirically the *ongoing* processes of secularization and desecularization.” And indeed, the fate of contemporary NRMs has been shaped significantly by the expansion of family life. As Barker (1995b: 169) puts it, “It does not take much imagination to recognize that a movement comprised of enthusiastic and inexperienced young converts with few if any responsibilities will differ fundamentally from one in which middle-aged adults, with 10 to 20 years experience of the movement, have a large number of dependent children.” On the whole, contemporary NRMs have struggled to develop communally based domestic cultures in support of children and families. This has posed serious problems as many have faced what Barker (2004: 98) refers to as “inverted disproportionality,” or the presence of larger numbers of children born within than first-generation converts.

The growth of the nuclear family in the absence of supportive domestic cultures has fundamentally altered the social organization of the established NRMs (Rochford 2007a, 2007b). Indeed, the fortunes of The Family/Children of God, the Unification Church, and ISKCON eroded significantly as families began leaving the communal fold to secure independent lives (Barker 1995a; Chancellor 2000; Introvigne 2000a; Rochford 1997, 2007b). The communal structures of all three groups to varying degrees have disintegrated under the weight of growing congregationalism. As communalism has given way to pluralistic communities, NRMs have faced pressures toward accommodation with dominant institutions and cultural patterns. This has been associated with a weakening of lifestyle requirements and a reworking of distinctions between insiders and outsiders (Barker 1995b: 174–75; Rochford 2000). Changes have included adults seeking outside employment, children attending secular schools, sharp reductions in proselytizing and rates of recruitment, declining levels of member commitment, the privatization of religious practice, and challenges to the authority

of the leadership (Amsterdam 2006; Barker 1995b; Chancellor 2000; Introvigne 2000a; Rochford 1995, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2007b). Not surprisingly perceptions of the outside society have changed accordingly (Chancellor 2000; Rochford 2000, 2007b). Images of the “corrupt” and “evil” system become difficult to sustain when substantial numbers of first- and second-generation members alike find their everyday lives bound by conventional forms of involvement. Moreover, this has led to shifting organizational priorities. The Family (Chancellor 2000), ISKCON (Rochford 1985: 271–72), Scientology (Melton 2000: 44–51), and the Unification Church (Introvigne 2000a: 47) have each embraced charitable and humanitarian work on behalf of society’s poor and needy, often in cooperation with people of other faiths. In giving up their struggle to change society and to model a viable alternative to it, the more prominent sixties NRMs no longer exist as religious movements but rather as established religious organizations (Rochford 2007b).

### *NRMs and Collective Violence*

Beginning in the 1990s, the study of collective violence quickly overshadowed other areas of NRM research. Scholarly interest emerged following a number of high profile episodes of collective violence involving a small number of new religious groups (Bromley and Melton 2002; Hall et al. 2000; Lifton 1999; Reader 2000; Robbins and Palmer 1997; Tabor and Gallagher 1995; Wessinger 2000). While the 1978 Jonestown, Guyana, mass suicide and murders attracted sociological analysis (Hall 1987; Weightman 1983), studies of violence multiplied significantly after the Branch Davidian murders and suicides outside of Waco, Texas, in 1993, the Solar Temple murder-suicides in Switzerland and Canada in 1994, the sarin gas attacks in Tokyo by members of Aum Shinrikyo in 1995, and the collective suicide of Heaven’s Gate members in California in 1997.

Because of their radical stance toward society, it is often assumed that NRMs are almost by definition dangerous and prone to violence (Melton and Bromley 2002). Such a view is questionable on several grounds: Only a handful of the existing NRMs have been involved in violent confrontations of any sort. In most instances, they have been targets of violence rather than instigators. In such situations, NRMs have typically responded by seeking to reduce tension with the larger society by accommodation, or through seeking intervention by the legal system. Moreover, religiously inspired violence around the globe

is far more common among the established world traditions than for new religions (Bromley 2004c; Bromley and Melton 2002; Robbins and Hall 2007).

Theory and research on collective violence has focused on identifying the range of factors that influence and promote episodes of violence (Bromley 2004c: 147; Bromley and Melton 2002; Dawson 2006; Galanter 1999; Hall et al., 2000; Robbins and Hall 2007; Wessinger 2000; Wright 1995). This effort has gone in two directions: The first has sought to identify specific causal factors in episodes of violence, most notably charismatic leadership, millennial/apocalyptic beliefs, radical dualism, and the social encapsulation of members. Beyond these internal factors, a number of external influences have also been identified, specifically the role of the anticult movement, the media, law enforcement, and other governmental control agencies (e.g., the Internal Revenue Service). Although both internal and external factors have clearly played a role, research suggests that no single factor or simple combination of factors is sufficient to explain collective violence (Bromley 2004c: 147; Dawson 2006: 146). Rather, violence most often grows out of escalating tensions and hostilities between culturally deviant NRMs and oppositional groups within the dominant society. Yet episodes of collective violence are inevitably situationally contingent, thus complicating attempts to construct theoretical and predictive models (Robbins and Hall 2007). Heaven's Gate, for example, "did not direct any violence outward, and their deaths lacked any obvious connection to external conflict" (Hall et al. 2000: 14). Moreover, as Massimo Introvigne (2000b: 157) suggests in the case of the Solar Temple, "when internal factors are sufficiently strong, even moderate opposition is transformed into a narrative of persecution."

Three general models have been formulated to explain collective violence in NRMs. These models diverge largely on the basis of the differing weight accorded internal versus external influences on violence. The first, by psychiatrist Marc Galanter (1999), primarily emphasizes internal movement dynamics. Based on Peoples Temple, the Branch Davidians, Heaven's Gate, and Aum Shinrikyo, Galanter identifies three internal factors and one external contingency conducive to promoting violence. Isolation increases the likelihood of violence by cutting the group off from external input, feedback and monitoring. The potential for violence escalates when a movement leader exhibits "grandiosity" leading to "paranoia" as he or she fears losing absolute control over followers. Paranoia may also lead a leader to create a siege mentality

whereby followers are led to believe that the group is under attack by enemies. Lastly, government mismanagement can provoke violence through aggressive and repressive actions, clumsiness, misinformation, and inaction.

Hall, Schuyler, and Trinh (2000) by contrast argue that internal factors play less of a role in episodes of collective violence. While acknowledging apocalyptic beliefs, charismatic leadership, high levels of internal control, and intense solidarity leading to isolation, these authors argue that violence is largely an outcome of distinctive patterns of interaction between a NRM and portions of society. Violence is seen as occurring on the basis of two structures of apocalyptic meanings: The first, a “warring apocalypse of religious conflict” emerges out of a confrontation between a NRM and a coalition of opponents (journalists and governmental officials) determined to frame the group “in terms of moral deviance” (Hall et al. 2000: 12). The second trajectory, “the mystical apocalypse of deathly transcendence” emerges as a “flight from external opposition” in the form of collective suicide. For those involved, collective suicide is the realization of an “other-worldly grace” (Hall et al. 2000: 192).

The third approach is Bromley’s theory of “dramatic denouements,” which represent rare but climatic moments that grow out of escalating and ultimately polarizing movement-society conflict. Dramatic denouements occur “when a movement and some segment of the social order reach a juncture at which one or both conclude that the requisite conditions for maintaining their core identity and collective existence are being subverted and that such circumstances are intolerable” (Bromley 2002: 11). Dramatic denouements are most likely during periods of intensified conflict where heightened mobilization and radicalization lead each side to view the other as dangerous. Both parties in the conflict define the other as “subversive” and a threat to their core identity. This may lead to a final reckoning meant to reverse power relationships and restore what each side deems as the appropriate moral order (Bromley 2002: 41). Bromley acknowledges that the progression from latent tensions to dramatic denouements is far from inevitable. Disputing parties may choose to abandon conflict at any point in favor of accommodation or retreat. Accommodation occurs when a movement turns toward greater conformity in an attempt to diffuse conflict, or where authorities show greater tolerance by shifting normative boundaries. Retreatist responses involve forms of withdrawal where a religious group leaves the conflict situation by way of migration

or isolation. Yet even where contestive responses do emerge, violence is not a certainty as the two sides may engage in symbolic posturing and ritualized disputation in place of battle (Bromley 2002: 12).

Another perspective is offered by Catherine Wessinger, who demonstrates how movement fragility contributes to collective violence. A combination of internal problems and external opposition makes followers despair of their attempt to realize collective salvation. In such situations, violence becomes a means for preserving religious goals as in the cases of Peoples Temple and Aum Shinrikyo, where violence was directed both at other members and at outsiders perceived as enemies (Wessinger 2000, 2002: 98).

As Bromley (2004c: 154) acknowledges, the effort to construct one or more theoretical models of collective violence remains a work-in-progress. Although many, if not most, of the factors contributing to violence have been identified, systematic theorizing has been confounded by the interactive and situational dynamics that are so integral to these events. Further theoretical specification might be gained if scholars focus attention on situations where conditions are ripe for violence but where none erupts (see e.g., Wessinger's 2000 discussion of Chen Tao). Rochford and Bailey (2006), for example, demonstrate how collective violence was averted at an intensely polarized renegade Hare Krishna community in West Virginia, called New Vrindaban, because challengers had acceptable exit options available in the form of ISKCON communities willing to absorb them. Without this exit option, there is reason to believe that tensions would have escalated with dissenters organizing to seize power from within.

### *New Religious Studies*

Two decades ago, Robbins (1988: 190–91) pronounced that the study of contemporary NRMs is transforming the sociology of religion and making the field more relevant to the discipline of sociology. More recently, Bromley (2004a) has suggested that the study of new religions is evolving into a specialty area with a distinct corpus of knowledge and theoretical foundation. He adds that the field is beginning to gain a foothold within universities as well as professional societies and associations.<sup>18</sup> Given the substantial contributions of new religious studies such

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<sup>18</sup> New religious studies has successfully established an identity within existing

optimism is understandable. As Dawson (2006: 199) cautions however, much remains to be done in the field with respect to answering some of the more significant questions within the sociology of religion. Moreover, because the field remains divided along political lines its potential for developing into an independent area of study remains in question.

Studies of NRMs have challenged a number of longstanding approaches and ideas central to the sociology of religion. Stark and Bainbridge's reformulation of secularization as a "self-limiting" process, as well as their rational choice theory of religion, grew out of observations of historical and modern NRMs. As noted earlier, research on NRMs has raised serious questions about the adequacy of the church-sect model. In addition, the study of new religions has contributed significant understanding to processes of recruitment, conversion, and disaffiliation, as well as the factors that promote movement change and transformation. The same can be said about the groundbreaking work on religion and collective violence. Theoretical innovation in these and other areas such as gender, healing, and globalization, have influenced a range of areas within the discipline of sociology including deviance, social movements, medical sociology, social psychology, the study of organizations, and the sociology of culture. To cite just one example, early studies of NRMs contributed to the development of resource mobilization theory and movement organization theory within the field of social movements (Bromley and Shupe 1979; Lofland and Richardson 1984; Rochford 1982, 1985, 1989; Snow 1993). Findings on recruitment and conversion to Nichiren Shoshu (Snow et al. 1980; Snow and Phillips 1980), the Hare Krishna (Rochford 1982, 1985; Snow et al. 1980; Snow et al. 1986), the Unification Church (Lofland 1966; Lofland and Stark 1965), as well as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Stark and Bainbridge 1980), have revealed the critical role of social networks, structural availability, and framing processes to differential recruitment. More recently, studies of NRMs have been part of a growing body of research on the significance of social movement

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associations such as the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, the Association for the Sociology of Religion, and the American Academy of Religion. Moreover, organizations such as the Center for the Study of New Religions (CESNUR) in Italy, Information Focus on Religious Movements (INFORM) in England, and the Institute for the Study of American Religion (ISAR) in the United States, all focus on new religious movements. The Internet site, The Religious Movements Homepage, at the University of Virginia, compiles and disseminates information about a range of NRMs. And, as previously noted, the field has its own specialty journal, *Nova Religio*.

culture (Johnson and Klandermans 1995). Research has demonstrated the cultural roots of contemporary NRMs and how their fate rests in part on developing group cultures supportive of their goals and ways of life (Dawson 2004, 2007; Lofland 1987, 1995; Rochford 1997, 2000, 2007b; Stark 1996b).

Despite the empirical and theoretical contributions of new religious studies, it faces significant challenges in gaining recognition as an established interdisciplinary field, for the academic study of NRMs continues to be burdened by intense polarization. Unlike other areas of sociology where research is largely theory driven, the field of new religious studies has remained preoccupied by issues of public policy relating to the legal and moral status of NRMs. Over the course of its development, the field has evolved into two opposing “thought communities” (Zablocki and Robbins 2001: 6–7). One group of scholars has vigorously defended the freedom of religious expression. This defense has at times come at the expense of critical scrutiny of the more troubling aspects of NRMs. The second community of researchers has sought actively to expose the excesses and abuses associated with NRMs in an effort to sway both public and legal opinion. These scholars have often been guilty of overlooking the more positive or even neutral qualities of NRMs. Although such politics are understandable given the intense controversy surrounding NRMs, this has too often come at the cost of advancing scholarship. As Zablocki and Robbins (2001: 6–7) argue, polemical excess has reached egregious levels to the extent that “it threatens to make a mockery of the enterprise of scholarship in the field.” Concepts and theories have at times been evaluated on the basis of their political merits, rather than their intellectual qualities. Years of endless debate about brainwashing have produced little in the way of new knowledge while distracting the field from other significant issues. Much the same can be said about issues of abuse. In arguing (or dismissing) the extent to which abuse has occurred within NRMs, scholars have generally failed to consider how alleged and actual abuse has influenced their development. The Family/Children of God and ISKCON, for example, have instituted a number of internal reforms and lowered boundaries with the outside society in response to past instances of child mistreatment and abuse.

If the study of NRMs is to become an established interdisciplinary field, ideology and politics must give way to intellectual debate centered on refining and/or reworking existing concepts, theories, and approaches within the study of religion. In recognition of this, some

scholars (Bromley 1998; Zablocki and Robbins 2001) have recently called for a more moderate and less ideologically driven approach. To do otherwise leaves the field in a position of marginality analogous to the relationship between NRMs and dominant religious and secular institutions.

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## CHAPTER TEN

### GLOBALIZATION AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION IN AMERICA: SOME REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVES

John H. Simpson

The concept of globalization evokes a number of themes and problems. A list would include the origin of the term and its referential domains, popular and scholarly uses of the term, opportunities and challenges for received theory, measurement strategies that provide reliable indicators of trends and an empirical purchase for the constructs of globalization narratives, and the understanding and amelioration of problems deemed to be of global scope: AIDS, pandemic disease, eradicable disease, violence against women, climate and environment, the distribution of wealth, nuclear weapons, widening the scope of human rights, violations of human rights, wars, and security. The list would also include religion as a source of individual and collective identity and conflict within the global field of action.

The popular, widespread use—one might say the globalized use—of the term almost always refers to the phenomenon of market-based production and exchange (Klein 2000). In this usage globalization is the unlimited circulation of goods, services, capital, and labor everywhere throughout the world on a cost (price) basis determined by supply and demand. To the extent that globalization is thought to be the installation everywhere of exactly the same economic form (capitalism) without remainder or supplement—a usage that has a palpable presence in anti-globalization discourse and journalism—globalization is an imagined phenomenon. Markets are embedded in culturally variant banking practices, pricing systems, and modes of allocation that compromise the transcendental purity of the code term “globalization.” This is easily seen where the charge of corruption (in many instances simply the way capitalism works locally) is brought to bear, but it applies as well to the imputation of exploitation in an across-the-board manner.

Rightist or leftist misattributions notwithstanding, globalization in the narrow and ubiquitous sense (the penetration of price-driven markets everywhere, but in “conversation” with local culture) is an undeniable

fact. In some cases markets may only operate at the boundary of a society, as in Cuba, but they operate nonetheless.

The narrowly specified, popular use of the term globalization rests on a descriptively accurate base. But it also betrays and hides the origin of the neologism and its deployment in a variety of perspectives and theoretical approaches that stretch far beyond popular usage in the search for an understanding of the world now made into the vastness of difference in one place (Held and McGrew 2002; Lechner and Boli 2005). In broad usage the term is a poly-referent encompassing continuities and disruptive events, continuities that stretch back to the early modern age and events that brought about a new world in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century.

As an adventure in the “history of the present,” this chapter summarizes some of the perspectives that have emerged in the past twenty-five years or so in the sociology of religion in America where the phenomenon of globalization has been addressed. In some cases these are “home grown” developments arising from within the field of the sociology of religion and finding resonance and possibilities for fruitful embellishment in conversation with sister disciplines. In other cases, especially with regard to left (Marxist) or right (choice) “economisms,” there has been an edgy accommodation at best between the development of perspectives on globalization and the discourses of the sociology of religion. Reductive asymmetry whether underwritten by the viewpoint of linear secularization, simple materialism, or some hard rock fundamentalism is pretty much absent from representative work in the sociology of religion and globalization.

### *American Exceptionalism and Sensitizing Events*

In keeping with the theme of this book the manifest provenance of the texts that will be discussed below is North American. But no sociological perspective, theory, theme or method stands alone and apart from the cross-national flow of observation, critique and the development of analysis. That having been said, there is an indelible American presence in the sociology of religion and globalization literature (Robertson and White 2002).

Size matters—but so does position. The head count of sociologists of religion in America outweighs the frequencies found in other national jurisdictions. That is more than a feature attributable simply

to population magnitude. American exceptionalism—non-establishment and free practice in the context of disembodied transcendent authority (“In God We Trust”) linked ambiguously (via civil religion) to a head of state who also governs knowing that his powers (so far) are limited by democracy, time, and the checks and balances of constitutionalized structures that seem as eternal as diamonds—is a form of sociopolitical life that simply offers more religious grist for the mill of sociology than is the case elsewhere (cf. Warner 1993).

But there is more to it than that, for the form of religious vigor underwritten in America with its denominational base interacted in the final decades of the twentieth century and early in the twenty-first century with five global events that forged and intensified a link between globalization and the sociology of religion. These were/are the American defeat in the Vietnam War, the Iranian Revolution, the fall of the Soviet Union, the events of 9/11, and the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq.

The triumph of “Godless Communism” in Vietnam in the context of the countercultural revolution of the ’sixties helped set the stage for the movement that came to be known as the New Christian Right. For some in America, political mobilization was linked to a tie between the apprehension of domestic moral turpitude—the move to normalize gay and lesbian sex, ERA as an attack on Biblically justified patriarchy, the judicial undoing of the practice of Christian prayer in public schools, the “Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice” treatment of marriage—and the victory of the Vietcong, viewed as a punishment of America for its godless ways (Simpson 1983).<sup>1</sup>

The Iranian Revolution (1979) had a more subtle effect. By linking revolution to theocracy, it became an opportunity for overturning the belief that revolution could be achieved only by secular forces that would bring into being—among other things—a radically secular society (Hadden and Shupe 1989; Beyer 2001). Some viewed this as a turn against modernity (Marty and Appleby 1993). Others saw it as a consequence of modernity, something modern in and of itself (Simpson 1994).

The final event in the twentieth century with sustaining consequences for the theme of globalization and religion was the collapse of the Soviet

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<sup>1</sup> Some readers will note a certain resemblance of the moral logic of the New Christian Right in America as it developed in the 1970s to the summary denunciation of Western culture found in the writings of the Islamicists (see Lechner and Boli 2005: 191–214).

Union in 1989. This event underwrote the definition of globalization as the triumph and spread of liberalism/capitalism everywhere (Fukuyama 1992). It also underwrote a role for religion as a conditioning or mediating force for social change, especially in Poland and the former German Democratic Republic. In the former Yugoslavia ethno-religiosity was linked to peaceful and successful (Slovenia) and violent and checkered (Bosnia, Kosovo) devolutions to “pure” nation-states.

A new form of the relationship between religion and globalization in the American public arena was forged on September 11, 2001 (Simpson 2003). For some a line was drawn between “good” and radically “bad” religion in the world. The events of 9/11 were attributed to radically bad religion. The subsequent American military response in Afghanistan was intended to secure America by destroying the forces of bad religion, forces assumed to be responsible (directly or indirectly) for the events of 9/11. At the same time (the story goes), the Afghan people were to be liberated from the oppression of bad religion so that they could enjoy the fruits of freedom and democracy.

Unlike the mission in Afghanistan, the invasion of Iraq was marketed using the secular languages of diplomacy, geo-politics, security, and human rights. That effort was only partially successful. The (almost) unilateral invasion of Iraq by the United States and the removal of Saddam Hussein were deemed to be a triumph for the possibility of democracy, a Western-type rule of law, and respect for human rights in Iraq. Instead the removal of Hussein unleashed the forces that he had successfully but brutally held in check, forces based on the traditional ethnic/tribal/clan-based/patriarchal segments among the Sunni, Shi’a, and Kurdish divisions of the Iraqi population. Given free play by the consequences of the invasion and fueled by the rivalries and geo-politics of the Middle East—often but not always traceable to differences rooted in religious identities—those forces triggered Iraq’s descent into the chaos of symmetric urban civil terror (Sunni/Sunni-Ba’athist vs. Shi’a) and asymmetric war pitting conventional armed forces (the United States and its allies) against the methods of terror.

It is against the background of these events—Vietnam, the rise of the New Christian Right, the Iranian Revolution, the demise of the Soviet Union, 9/11, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq—that the tie between the sociology of religion in America and the phenomena of globalization was forged, developed, and continues to enlarge. That tie, however, was not only the result of the contextual force of a set of proximate domestic and international events and trends. There were

(and are) as well both what could be called “the infrastructure of the world” that was in place and the conditioning effects of certain ideas embedded in the deep structure of sociology as a way of understanding modernity, a way that comes from within modernity itself.

*Globalization and the Long Duration*

Taking the longest possible view the *sine qua non* of the infrastructure of the world—the thing that “brung us” to the globalization dance—is human gene-culture co-evolution (Blute 2006).<sup>2</sup> Human gene-culture co-evolution has led to the biosocial dominance of the niche called earth by us (*homo sapiens*).<sup>3</sup> Measured on the time scale of the universe this is a very recent state of affairs.

Dominance includes and is attributable to our observational and operational powers, and our consequent (but also determined) social organization. The environmental condition that secures the world as one human place is the size and distribution (density) of the human population on the earth. The idea of globalization (a construction on top of, so to speak, the human domination of the place called earth) occurs at a point in time that is only a very small magnitude of distance

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<sup>2</sup> The idea of globalization is a time-based concept and follows the ‘then/now’ convention of general sociology—thematizing shifts in order to construct theories of the present based on changes of the past: pre-modern/modern, *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft*, unrationalized/rationalized, undifferentiated/differentiated, etc. In the case of globalization the question is: When did it start? There are various answers. My preference is to pose the question in terms of infrastructure or the point where the environment in which human activity occurs supports and sustains communication between humans who are located everywhere on the surface of the earth. Globalization, then, is a population-based, technologically driven phenomenon traceable in the first instance to modern Western science that provided the means of population growth (control of disease, etc) and the modern means of communication.

<sup>3</sup> “Dominance” as used here has a neutral connotation. Our practices have changed and continue to change the physical environment in which we and all other life forms exist. Those practices may lead to our disappearance from the earth on account of the destruction of the means of human survival and subsistence. Changing those practices (as we might via the application of reason and science) to secure the sustainability of the means of human survival is also a form of dominance, environmentalist rhetoric notwithstanding. Dominance is not the same thing as destruction. Hugging trees displays the hoped-for-dominance of non-destruction. It is intended to prevent the human destruction of the tree via a preserving form of dominance (the choice to not destroy the tree). Dominance encompasses both destruction and preservation. Opting for one side or the other of that distinction does not do away with dominance or the will to power.

away from the present on the time scale of the universe. But it is a point in time where we, *homo sapiens*, bend (for better or for worse) most everything to our will everywhere. Our natural enemies now are things we can't see (some of the 'flora' and 'fauna' of the microscopic world) and intraspecies predators.

Our observational and operational powers expressed in the forms of science and technology enable the means of transportation and communication that now in principle and for some in fact provide universal communication and connection and the attribution that the world is one place in time. Globalization is a social construction made possible by our dominance of the earth in the sense described above, the most fundamental contingency on which globalization rests (viewed in terms of the evolution of the universe).

This distal deep structure is the background for the proximate events adduced here as contextual stimulants for the tie between the sociology of religion in America and the phenomenon of globalization. It is as well the background for certain ideas that emerged with the advent of sociology as a way of thought promising an understanding of modernity. These include the notion of religion as a starting point for understanding society, society and the social as constructions and not external natural entities, and the unity of society in the face of difference. Applied to the phenomenon of globalization, these ideas provide a set of entry points for constructing narratives about globalization that make sense of the world from the perspective of sociology. They enable the transition from sociology to "globology."

### *Constructing the Globe: The Sociological Sources*

In unfolding the sociological turn in Western thought especially where it comes to the analysis of religion attention is conventionally given to Émile Durkheim and Max Weber. Yet it was Karl Marx who started the ball rolling, so to speak, regarding the analysis of religion as the critical entry into the understanding of modern society (Marx and Engels 1960). Marx started with religion because it was his sense that religion was the major factor in promoting and sustaining beliefs that prevented the destruction of exploitation founded on the class-based relations of nineteenth-century capitalism. When Marx demanded that religion be overcome in order to further the progress of humanity, he simultaneously provided the insight that religion (and, by extension,

bourgeois values) was the key to social integration. Only once the nut of social integration was cracked was the way clear for change at the hands of the organized (and, thereby, integrated) proletariat.

It is unfortunate that Marx's secular prophetic vision (and its eventual failure, at least in its original form) tends to obscure what can be construed as a linchpin of social analysis, Marx's "gift" to the understanding of the modern world: the methodological idea that the understanding of society proceeds from the description, analysis, and critique of the leading ideologies (religion in Germany in Marx's day) that secure the sense that a society and the lives of those in it have meaning, integrity, and justification. What Marx's gift can uncover, of course, is that the leading ideologies are, simply, props for false consciousness, exploitation, and inhumane action.

There is another gift that Marx provided to the cause of understanding modernity, a gift that is not unrelated to the one just described. It may be that the most remarkable thing in Marx's legacy is his masterful interpretation of capitalism as he knew it in the nineteenth century (Zeitlin 1967). Although there were precursors (Smith 1981), Marx made the definitive analysis that showed us that there was nothing natural or God-given about the economy. It is a human construction and, hence, subject to human re-working. And so by extension are all the institutions and systems of society, including religion. Marx provided no blueprint for how the elements of a society are constructed, but he did spell out with elegance what the operational consequences of an institution (capitalism as he knew it) were once it was in place.

Marx's gifts to the understanding of modernity live on as generalizations that provide the key to the analysis of modern societies. On one side there is the problem theme of religion that generalizes to the problem themes of meaning and semantics. On the other side there is the problem of constructed institutions (the economy in Marx's case) that generalizes to the problem theme of structure. Following Marx, then, we can say that the understanding of modern society follows from the analysis of the ways in which semantics (meaning) "plays together" with structure—keeping in mind that Marx explicitly thematized time as well. The circulation of money, commodities, and capital (the means of constructing a capitalist economy) is a time-based concept. So on a more general level is the interplay of semantics and structure.

Where Marx set the frame for the analysis of modern societies, others put paint on the canvas. If Marx were right regarding the critique of religion as the entry point for understanding society, then progress

in understanding modernity would follow from the analysis of how religion, itself, is analyzed in modernity. It would be erroneous to claim that Durkheim was intent on “improving” Marx. Nevertheless he enlarged our understanding of the semantic/structure distinction by arguing that categories (sacred/profane) are not fixed *a priori* divisions of the world in the mind (as Kant thought) but arise in and from our experience (Durkheim 1915). Categories are simplifications by the mind (that part of the brain that does these things) of traces left in the brain (we would now say) of the contrasts experienced in the ebb and flow of social life (in Durkheim’s case, collective behavior *vs* solitude). We understand ourselves to be in society because our minds are bound (if only for the moment and/or in remembrance) to one side or the other (depending on context) of the symbolized categories that the widely shared experience of society throws up.

The argument is unabashedly reflexive yet asymmetric as well. We experience society because we experience the social relations that are congealed in social symbols. For Durkheim this reflexive semiotic “economy” leads to the reality of social structure, the powerful asymmetric apprehension that we are part of something larger than ourselves, the society in which we live and move and have our being—and that we transfigure into the symbols of the sacred and the profane among other things.

By delving into how society is a thing constructed by those who are its parts (ourselves), yet a thing that we know as real and believe to be objectively real, Durkheim unpacked Marx’s sense that society is a human product and not a naturally given thing. Weber enlarged these developments. On the semantics side he underscored the importance of the actor’s interpretation and understanding of the flow of life in which s/he is embedded (Swatos et al. 1998: 549). The religions of the world provide the primary tools via ethics for interpretations and understandings, and where ethics vary there are differing structural outcomes—intentional or unintentional. The most “famous” was the appearance of capitalism in the West.

One might disagree with Weber’s contention that capitalism as it developed had a distinct “elective affinity” with Protestant inner-worldly asceticism. But even if it were the case that religious asceticism was consequential for the emergence of capitalism, “[t]oday...victorious capitalism, since it rests on mechanical foundations, needs its support no longer. The rosy blush of its laughing heir, the Enlightenment, seems also to be irretrievably fading...” (1958: 182).

Capitalism, in other words, has its own rules and justifications that are anchored in nothing other than itself. It has become a self-sustaining structure, Weber is saying, that does not use the semantics of religion or the semantics of worldly philosophies to achieve its purposes. Indeed, it does not use any semantics that are external to those it creates in order to sustain itself.<sup>4</sup> And what applies to capitalism applies to all of the institutional spheres of modern society including religion. Each operates with its own logic and ethics. There is no commonly held set of interpretive options set in and expressed by a dominant structure that rules over all. With its incommensurable, competing value-spheres—each with its own structural base, operational logics, and ethical perspectives—modernity for Weber is like the warring gods of polytheism: So long as life remains imminent and is interpreted in its own terms, it knows only of an unceasing struggle of these gods with one another. . . . The ultimately possible attitudes toward life are irreconcilable, and hence their struggle can never be brought to a final conclusion (1946: 152).

We have in hand, then, the basic contextual elements that provide a frame for the globalization/sociology of religion nexus in America: salient national and international events of the 'sixties onwards; human bio-social dominance of Earth as the tipping point for the sensibility of globalization; structure and semantics as the fundamental distinction emerging from the development of sociology as the way of understanding modernity. Nestled within that frame there is a set of perspectives on globalization (not without remainder and supplement) that constitute the landscape of thinking in America about globalization and religion.

*Religion As Silence in the Global Circumstance: Wallerstein*

How is the world organized? What is the overlay on the world's connected population that makes a whole out of its parts if, indeed, there is a whole? There are economic, political, and cultural themes in the answers to the question, some focused on only one theme, others mixing

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<sup>4</sup> Marx might reply, "Yes, an observer would note that the manifest semantics of capitalism seem unrelated to the semantics of other institutions. But capitalism as well spins out latent semantics that appear as the semantics of other institutions and that sustain the reproduction of capitalism although those who use create them and use them don't really know that that is what they are doing. They are marks taken in by their own act."

themes. Immanuel Wallerstein provides a clear example of a “pure” thematic approach to globalization, a model that reads the world today as a unity of parts brought about by capitalism (1974–1989).

Wallerstein’s account of the world assumes that humans are organized in the way they are primarily on account of material wants and needs. Over the course of human history so far, there have been three types of social system, each having a distinct division of labor, pattern of exchange and distribution, spatial reach, and political and cultural variability. The first mini-systems of hunting, gathering, and early agricultural societies had a simple division of labor, exchange and distribution according to need (more or less), limited spatial reach (the unknown world lay just over the horizon), simple polities, and little cultural variability. World-empires entailed more complicated patterns. They had a single political system and division of labor, but there were many cultures under the imperial umbrella. And an empire did not stop just over the horizon as the great *imperia* of antiquity (China, Rome, etc.) attest. Plunder, staples, commodities, and luxury goods passed from the hinterland to the empire’s political center where they supported the ruler’s bureaucracy, “life-style,” and, often, ambition as a patron of monumental architecture and the arts. But no empire ever encompassed the entire globe.

A new pattern began to emerge in the West about 1500. Rather than simply flowing to political lords who controlled the means of violence, economic surplus (capital) began to accumulate in urban centers that were not under the direct tributary control of landed rulers. Merchants saved the profits (surplus) from trade in order to expand trade. Large-scale trade over long distances in commodities and staples arose, a trade that was not within the jurisdictional bounds of a single political authority nor weighted in favor of luxury goods.

This led to a third type of economic formation, the modern capitalist world-system that covers the whole Earth. The world system has multiple political and cultural centers and is divided into three sets of nation-states encompassing a single division of labor: the core, the semi-periphery, and the periphery. The core now consists of nation-states with advanced technology and internally complex divisions of labor. States on the periphery provide raw materials and staples to the core. The semi-periphery combines the properties of the core and the periphery.

The system is ordered with the core dominating the semi-periphery and the periphery, and the semi-periphery dominating the periphery.

Capital accumulates in the core. According to Wallerstein the world-system has always had not only a set of core states but a dominant state within the core as well. For most of the nineteenth century this was Britain, with leadership then passing to the United States in the wake of World War I.<sup>5</sup>

The basic unit of analysis for Wallerstein is the nation-state. Strength varies with position in the world-system. The elites of core states operate by promoting and underwriting a strong state that will protect their interests and maintain a dominant position vis-à-vis the semi-periphery and the core. On the other hand, the elites of peripheral states have little interest in developing a strong state that would threaten the comprador relationship they enjoy with the core and that would diminish the wealth (through taxation) that they accumulate by controlling the flow of raw materials and cheap staples to the core.

For Wallerstein both the nation-state and its culture are derivations of the system of capitalist world dominance. The state is bent by the logic and operations of the economic system. Culture including religion reflects and promotes the values and ideas of capitalism and hides its contradictions. The rules of the game of capitalism rule the world, rules that are adaptively embellished in response to technological change, new demands, the spread of markets, and variations in the amount of circulating capital and its rate of circulation, but rules that however much they change never overturn the basal rule relating supply, demand, cost, and price. In Wallerstein's model the unity of the world as a structured system of differentially positioned nation-states is attributed to the semantics of capitalism. Others take a different view.

*Implicit Religion in the Global Circumstance: Meyer*

Like Wallerstein, John Meyer, too, foregrounds the nation-state as a primary unit of analysis, and he recognizes that there is variability in development and prosperity between nation-states. But he and his colleagues propose a different semantics to account for the unity of the

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<sup>5</sup> Wallerstein's analysis suggests that the structure of the world system remains the same despite the movement of states among and between the categories of the system. Britain's demise as the leading core state did not change the form of the system, only Britain's position in the system. Neither will the rise of China to the position of dominance among the core states, if it occurs, change the system even though China, ironically and paradoxically, is an "officially" Communist state.

world. They also move to incorporate the “individual” into an understanding of the “world” (Meyer 1980; Meyer et al. 1987, 1997).

Meyer observes that despite significant differences in wealth among nation-states there are prominent similarities, similarities that in some cases seem inconsistent with a society’s needs. A good example of this they argue (with empirical analysis) is the spread of formal education. Every nation-state has a system of education that is separated from the nuclear family, organized on a formal basis, and uses methods that tend to be remarkably similar around the world. This is so despite the fact that poor nation-states may hardly be able to afford it, and the training received (human capital) may be irrelevant for working in the society. Why, then, is there a more or less elaborate system of formal education system everywhere?

Meyer’s answer is embedded in an elaboration of Weber’s seminal analysis of bureaucracy, the typical form that the organization of work takes in modernity (Meyer and Rowan 1991). Weber “famously” argues that in modern societies the organization of human endeavor outside the bounds of family, kin, friendship, and traditional ascriptive forms of association has a rational-legal basis. People are collectively organized in order to achieve some purpose that is sought in the methodical application of instrumental rules and procedures. Results are not achieved in a magical or co-incidental way. Results are caused by the enactment of rationalized means—the argument ultimately can be anchored in modern science—leading to desired ends.

But why would anyone who plays a role in an hierarchically organized bureaucracy, where rules and procedures eventually take the form of orders and commands (whether or not perceived as such), do what people most often do—that is, choose to obey an order and act in conformity with what is thought to be a rational rule? The answer is that rational rules are deemed to have legitimacy. Within the order of a bureaucracy they have the force of law. They are “legit.” They are *lex*. They are authoritative. So they bend the will to conformity. (Money goes only so far, Weber would argue, in inducing adherence to rules.)

Meyer doesn’t disconnect means and ends or rules and goals. But he does in effect make a strong case that there is no necessary relationship between rules and goals. Rules may not bring about the state of affairs that they are intended to create. There is, in other words, a contingent relationship between rules and goals, and rules and goals can “inhabit separate homes of their own,” so to speak. This point is foundational for Meyer’s argument. As such they are believed in for their own sake,

believed in because they are rational (in the case of means) or because they are desirable (in the case of ends).

According to Meyer, it is the separation of the implied action in rules from intended goals and the drift and circulation among elites and functionaries everywhere—the “connected rationality” of the idea that rationalized rules are themselves legitimate, quite apart—from whether the goals they are intended to achieve can be achieved in a concrete locale or circumstance that leads to the institutional similarity of nation-states. Poor nation-states have a formal educational system because their elites, like all elites everywhere, believe that a modern nation-state must have an educational system in order to be modern. This argument applies to all the ways of being modern and participating at the nation-state level in the modern world. And it applies to NGOs and the myriad set of specialized organizations that operate at the world level in a regulatory, instrumental, or consummatory way—the Olympic Games being an example of the latter.

Thus for Meyer, the ways of being rational have a consensual and even, perhaps, mysterious presence in the minds of the elites and the functionaries who run the world and its system of nation-states. They constitute a social ontology, a constructed sense of being, a sense that this is the way things are and should be, a taken-for-granted sense that things are right where action is in correspondence with the desiderata of the global social ontology, which is actually believed to exist, and the institutions it creates: education, science, democracy, and the regimes of human rights, equality, and justice (Meyer 1980; Meyer et al. 1997).

The social ontology of modernity operates at the nation-state level and within and across various organizations with global reach (the United Nations, for example). But it also permeates the world at the individual level according to Meyer. It assigns reality to individual actors, and it endows the actions of individuals with meaning and legitimacy. The social ontology of modernity is borne on the shoulders of individuals everywhere as they are constituted by it as rational subjects who must be cultivated and treated as such, subjects who, themselves, should be accorded the fruits of modern rationalities—education, science, democracy, rights, equality, justice—even as they enact those rationalities (as they should) in countless ways in the ordinary world of everyday life. According to Meyer, then, the unity of the world is found in the homogeneity created by the enactment everywhere in various ways of the rationalities embedded in the semantics of the social ontology of modernity.

At a certain level of abstraction Wallerstein and Meyer “share the same bed.” Where the semantics of capitalism and the semantics of the social ontology of modernity differ as regards the source of the world’s unity they agree that, whatever the source, it is an asymmetric force. Both the rules of capitalism and the rules of the social ontology of modernity *create* the world in which they operate. But there the resemblance ends. Wallerstein’s world is ruled by the stern, monotheistic deity of capitalism. He determines all. Meyer’s world of autonomous nations and institutions resonates with the polytheistic gods of Weber’s modernity. They are not engaged in mortal combat, but they do vie unceasingly with one another for “bragging rights” regarding who best exemplifies the enactment of the rules of the modern social ontology.

*Toward A Typology of Religion in the Global Circumstance*

The perspectives of Wallerstein and Meyer are commonly cited by researchers and scholars working on the problem of globalization and culture (including religion). And they appear as foils in the critical run-ups of scholars introducing elaborations or alternatives to the understanding of globalization (Robertson 1992; Beyer 1994; Lechner and Boli 2005). But one might ask, “Are they epistemically central to the understanding of religion in a globalized world within the sociology of religion in North America?” For Wallerstein one could say that religion at best is a side-show and simply one bin in the large warehouse of culture that can be glossed, bracketed, and left by the side of the road on the way to a “real” understanding of how the global situation is constituted and how it operates.

For Meyer the answer is more complex. The social ontology of modernity is a “true” independent variable in the constitution of the means and ends of nation-states, the nation-state system, and the individual within those milieux. Where does it come from? As Meyer avers, its roots are found in the structure and semantics of medieval Christendom, its evolution to the modern nation-state system, and the secularization of the social teachings of Latin Christianity (Meyer et al. 1987, 1997).<sup>6</sup> More narrowly, one could say that the modern social

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<sup>6</sup> While his treatment pertains to the West and is not specifically projected to the global level, Charles Taylor (2004), makes an argument that resembles Meyer’s. Accord-

ontology is the ethics of Liberal Christianity sheared of theological ontology or reference to a divinely ordered “great chain of being” (Lovejoy 1936). In that sense the modern social ontology falls within the category of *implicit religion*, but implicit religion at the global level (cf. Bailey 1997).

How then does one deal with Wallerstein and Meyer as representative viewpoints? How then does one deal with them especially where the *donner und blitzen* of “true” religious authenticity at the global level roars and flashes on the horizon of the sociology of religion in America (Stark 2001)?

One could argue for typological completeness as Niebuhr (1951) did in his consideration of church and sect in America, the mooted question now being encapsulated within the semantics/structure distinction at the global level and put as the relation between religion and the contemporary global circumstance. Wallerstein and Meyer would define places on a continuum anchored at one end by “there but of no consequence” (Wallerstein) and at the other end by “there and consequential.” Meyer, perhaps, would occupy a middle position: “transformed religion as consequential.”<sup>7</sup>

#### *Religion As Identity in the Global Circumstance: Robertson*

Where Wallerstein and Meyer represent what could be called “high modern” views of the presence and operation of religion in the global circumstance, other scholars have moved in the direction of thematizing the explicit presence of religion as a factor in today’s world (surprising, perhaps, to the high moderns). Here we have the projects of Roland Robertson and Peter Beyer.

The roots of Robertson’s perspective on globalization are found in work that he did with Nettl in the ’sixties on modernization (1968).<sup>8</sup>

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ing to Taylor, the modern rationalities of rights, equality, and justice permeate our sense of how we should conduct our public affairs.

<sup>7</sup> On what might be called the “overtness” of religion, it is possible to argue that the Marxist analysis of Wallerstein only hides, not dispenses with, goals and values that are the same as those of Meyer’s modern social ontology: de-ontologized, secularized ends that can be summarized as freedom, equality, and justice. In word, the purpose of Communism was to bring those values to realization in the “real” world.

<sup>8</sup> Robertson was one of the first to use the term “globalization” in sociological academic discourse. He used it in 1980 to describe the widespread sensibility that the

They rejected the view that development at the nation-state level traced a progressive linear trajectory that is the same everywhere. Rather, they argued, the elites and functionaries of nation-states constantly compare what is going on in their jurisdictions with what is going on elsewhere. They pick and choose and apply models, standards, and ways of proceeding (all variable) from what is available offshore and seems to jibe with local realities and needs. There is, in other words, no one true path to modernization and development. The elites and functionaries of nation-states accept the premise that development is a good thing, but the means that are selected and applied to reach that end are not homogenous across the nation-states of the world.

The essential ingredient that Robertson takes from his work with Nettl and expands and elaborates into his perspective on globalization is the social comparison process that he and Nettl saw as the key to an understanding of the variability of the paths to modernization and development. Robertson's globalization perspective, however, is not an analytic description of modernization and development as such. Rather it is a multi-faceted foray into the sources and consequences of the comparison/contrast process in a world now made into one place (however that came about).

The units in this world are nations, the system of nation-states, and individuals (selves). Becoming one place means that these units exist in a circumstance where each becomes intensively aware (via comparison and contrast) of the extensive presence of a virtually bottomless sea of others governed by the sense of relativity. Who and what one is can be found only by observing what others are. The apprehension of difference rules, and that requires the comprehension by units of who they are. Units (selves, nations, the system of nation-states) must constantly construct, maintain, and repair and revise, if necessary, their identities—a process that provides a unit with a space that others can recognize in a world now made into one place.

In constructing identities units use both local and global resources. This observation of Robertson's, which he refers to "glocalization," has far-reaching consequences for the understanding of globalization. It means among other things that the semantics of capitalism (Wallerstein)

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Earth had become one place in a social, but not societal, sense (cf. Robertson 1992: 31; Bergesen 1980).

and the semantics of the global social ontology (Meyer) can be viewed as resources for identity construction and not simply as transcendent reductions of an immanent thing, references to theories that stand apart from what they theorize.

Viewed as a time-space concept, glocalization also means that the periodization of history and the mooted transitions that are conventionally employed by sociologists to describe the turn to modernity, especially the *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* distinction, can be viewed as descriptions of resources for constructing an identity in the present and not, simply, as abstract historicisms.

Glocalization can also be read as the construction of identities in the social “pressure cooker” of the world that provokes a paradoxical unfolding of the universal/particular distinction. Reading the particular as the local and specifically as ethnic, religious, and traditional forms of culture that have on-ground grip, Robertson observes that these (local) particularities—*contra* the imputed universality of modernization and development as rational processes—now enjoy widespread salience as resources for identity construction and expression in the global arena. The particular, and notably religion, is universally used to solve the identity problem. The universal encapsulates the particular, and the particular takes on the guise of the universal. In Robertson’s words, there is a “particularization of universalism” and a “universalization of particularism” in the global circumstance (1992: 100).

Robertson’s perspective on globalization enables him to make sense of things that lie outside the scope or seem unexplainable within the scope of perspectives such as Wallerstein’s and Meyer’s. This is especially true for the sensitizing events—irritations that provoked a turn to global thinking in America—of the Iranian Revolution and the rise of the New Christian Right. Robertson was the first social scientist to recognize that fundamentalist and conservative religious movements within nation-states in the latter part of the twentieth century were not simply retrograde attempts to implant an imagined past in the present. Rather they were ways of responding to constraints imposed by a world made into one place, a response to the expectation that a nation project an image of authentic identity in the global arena.

The fundamentalists in both Iran and America responded (in the face of what was considered by fundamentalists in both places to be the degradation or lowly status of their traditions) to the global notion that they were entitled to maintain the integrity of their tradition and (taking things a step farther) tie it in various ways to the conduct of

their nation's affairs (as they believed it once was) so that their nation would once again be seen as an expression of authentic religion (in their eyes and each in its own way, of course).

Where Meyer and Wallerstein can be tagged as high modernists, Robertson is somewhere between modernism and postmodernism. He does not throw out the categories of Western thought (universal/particular) used by moderns in a de-ontologized, secular way. On the other hand, he grapples with the problem of the other at the global level and foregrounds it—explicitly in the modern social psychology of comparison and implicitly in the modern sociology of reference—in a way that underscores (in tune with the postmoderns) the complex, uncontained heterogeneity of today's world as they see it (Lyotard 1984).

Simple comparison processes quickly melt into overload in the global circumstance. There are too many things to be considered in a deliberate way. That is the edge where Robertson operates. However, it is not an edge without its handholds, as his identification of basic units (selves, nations, nation-states) in the global circumstance makes clear. The semantics of difference and identity operates in all of those structures and in that, perhaps, the unity of the world is found, according to Robertson.

Robertson's perspective, unlike those of Wallerstein and Meyer, opens up the question of how religion is used, particularly at the nation-state level, to construct an identity in the global field. Referring to Japan, Robertson notes that religion(s) there (and the construction of a religion, Shinto) can be seen as part of both modernization and globalization projects (1992: 85–96). One could make reference as well to Kemalist Turkey and the formal secularization of the Turkish state as a way of dealing with religion in establishing a national identity during the reign of high modernity, a way that has come back to haunt Turkish elites in recent times with the advent of Islamicism and the question of Turkey's entry into the European Union. Finally, there is Israel founded under the aegis of the Labour Party, a secular socialist party, and founded with the sense that the wind of secularity would never cease filling the sails of the Israeli ship of state. Who would have guessed in 1948 that fifty years or so later Israeli society would be divided politically and socially and, often bitterly, along religious/secular lines?<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Clearly, Israel is not divided on the question of survival as a nation-state. How to achieve survival is another matter.

*Religions As Social Systems in the Global Circumstance: Beyer*

Robertson's perspective points to the variable fate of religion in the modern and global circumstance, but it does not suggest that religion is systemic in the way that nation-states are systemic or in the way that capitalism systemically organizes the world according to Wallerstein. Peter Beyer, on the other hand argues that religion can be viewed as systemic in the global circumstance in the same formal way that economies and politics are (Beyer 1994, 2006). Religions take the form of a system.

What is a system? Beyer's answer is anchored in the work of the German social theorist, Niklas Luhmann, whose extensive work is notoriously difficult to read, as he himself admits. And where read in translation there is the problem of "two Luhmanns," the Luhmann in German and the Luhmann in German translated into English or whatever (1995: xxvii–xxxviii).<sup>10</sup> Be that as it may, an understanding of the range of ways that religion has been conceptualized as having a presence in the globalized world must come to grips with Beyer's work, and that means having at least a bare-bones outline in hand of what Luhmann is up to.

Readers who have already raised their eyebrows when they read the word "system" should lower them at least until they have an understanding of how Luhmann uses the word. He does so in a different way from Talcott Parsons, whose view remains part of the core heritage of American sociology (1951). The reference to a system in Luhmann always is a reference to the system/environment distinction. There is no such thing in Luhmann's theoretical world as a system without an environment, and the environment of a system is complexly inchoate in contrast to the relative simplicity of a system from the perspective of those on the system side of the system/environment distinction.

A social system exists, according to Luhmann, "whenever the actions of several persons are meaningfully interrelated and are thus, in their very interconnectedness, marked off from an environment. As soon as any communication whatsoever takes place among individuals, social systems emerge" (1977: 70). What sets a particular social system apart from its environment—an environment that includes other social systems—are the codes that underlie communication among meaningfully

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niklas\\_Luhmann](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niklas_Luhmann); <http://www.libfl.ru/Luhmann>.

interrelated individuals. Codes are bi-polar distinctions: ownership/non-ownership, in power/out of power, true/false. These codes are the “heart” of the differentiated modern social systems that are an economy, a polity, and a science.

In the day-to-day worlds of business and commerce, politics, and science those who communicate obviously do not constantly embed the words of the codes in their communicative actions (“Oh, yes, by the way, we’re talking about...”) or even shape speech and gesture after pondering whether what they are going to say or imply in gesture fits directly with a code. But if one examines the communicative actions that do occur in a social system, Luhmann in effect is arguing that codes would appear as (metaphorical) factors in a factor analysis sense, factors that “explain” all of the communication that does go on within a social system. The difference between social systems is the difference between codes.

Ongoing communication is a social system. It does not constitute a social system as if were an external source of creation. A social system is communication. A social system is not (surprise!) persons playing roles. Persons playing roles are the environment of communication just as the brain is the environment of the mind. In modern societies, economic, political and scientific communication form closed systems that use only their own logics (codes) to make and re-make themselves continuously.

A system can be affected by what happens in another system, by something in its environment. But the solution to the problem lies in communication within the affected system using its own logics (communications). Furthermore, one social system can play a role within another social system. Obviously, science cannot be done without spending money, without there being communication within the system of science that embeds the economic system. But the code of the economic system does not appear as an “eigenvalue” (own value) in a (metaphorical) factor analysis of the code of the social system of science. The code of the economic system is used to implement the code of the social system of science.

It is not by accident that the bi-polar codes of the economic, political, and scientific social systems are put in the foreground by Luhmann as well as the codes of law, education, art, and religion. These are the institutions of a modern society. Among these, religion poses a special problem that is code specific. Luhmann proposes the code transcendence/immanence as the code of religion. As a scholar within the

discipline of religious studies Beyer says, in effect, “That may be well and good for the West even though it obscures other categories used in the West: sacred/profane, ultimate/non-ultimate, absolute/conditioned, cosmic/nomic.”

Beyer argues for salvation/damnation as the code constructed in the context of the Reformation, Counter-Reformation and, one would add, the (roughly) co-incident threat of Islam and the expulsion of the Jews. The idea of that code, the argument goes, was adumbrated in the situation where one form of religion (for example, Roman Catholic) was constrained to compare itself with other forms (Protestantism). The code was the same in form (but not content) as the capitalist code that developed about the same time in the West. The general argument is that the idea of a code as a basis for constructing what one *is* in an environment where there are lots of things that one *is not* first came about in the West and then spread across the world.

Beyer detects codes in his examination of some world religions, a construction in support of his diffusion claim: *halal/haram*, Islam; *nirvana/samsara*, Buddhism; *moksah/samsara*, Hinduism. Examining these, the Christian code (salvation/damnation), and many other codes that can be attributed to variants within world religions and other religious expressions that have global significance, for example, Traditional African Religion, Beyer concludes that the latency common to all codes is the blessed/cursed distinction. That code enables Beyer’s claim that there are commensurate social systems of religions operating in global society (2006: 79–97).

While Beyer does not elaborate the possibility of a code for the social system of the social systems of religions operating in global society, the obvious candidate would seem to be in-dialogue/not-in-dialogue. One might argue here for Buber’s I/Thou distinction (1958) transformed into a systemic code.

### *Conclusion*

Viewed in terms of the structure/semantics distinction, Beyer’s work presses the case (as any Luhmannian reduction would) that structure is semantics and semantics is structure. This is much different from perspectives that moot the operation of meanings within some pre-identified structure: nation-states for Wallerstein; nation-states and individuals for Meyer; selves, nations, and the system of nation-states for Robertson.

One might say that the world of Wallerstein, Meyer, and Robertson resembles the world of Newtonian physics. One can measure the mass and velocity of an object, and one measurement does not preclude another measurement at the same time. If one weighs an automobile at rest, its velocity (zero) doesn't disappear. For Wallerstein, Meyer, and Robertson, structure is there and meaning is there, each as a separate, constructed, accessible object (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

Luhmann's world, on the other hand, is analogous to the world of quantum physics. One has to choose whether one wants to measure the mass or the velocity of an electron because one disappears when the other is measured. For Luhmann, in observing one (semantics, for example), the other (structure) disappears. By the same token, semantics (meaning) is put in the background where observational claims are made about structure. But as a Luhmannian observer of observers knows, semantics and structure are the same thing (communication).

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