When my teacher, Alfred Schutz, presided over the defences of doctoral dissertations, he always opened the proceedings by saying: ‘Mr X or Ms Y, would you please tell us what you did, and why anybody should be interested in it.’

The topic of this lecture, faith and development, is presumably of interest to people in either area. Why should anyone else be interested in it? I’ll tell you why. What is today’s world like, religiously speaking? A little over a hundred years ago, Nietzsche proclaimed the death of God. In doing so he only put into more poetic language what had been a common
assumption of European thought since the enlightenment: that religion would decline, and perhaps eventually disappear, with the progress of modern civilisation. This assumption was shared by the two thinkers who were pivotal in shaping the thought of the 19th and 20th centuries, namely Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud.

The thrust of their analysis was that religion was false consciousness in the service of oppression in the psychology of individuals – an illusion generated by infantile wishful thinking. Both of the major founders of modern sociology, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, came to the same conclusion, though for different reasons and with different emotional reactions – Durkheim, an atheist, quite cheerfully; Weber, a melancholy agnostic, with quiet resignation.

**Secularisation theory**

In the 1950s and 1960s most sociologists dealing with religion also believed that modernity necessarily led to a decline of religion, a belief that was systematised in so-called secularisation theory. In the interests of full disclosure, let me admit that I also adhered to this theory, and indeed helped to articulate it in my early career as a sociologist of religion. Gradually I changed my mind, not because of some philosophical or theological conversion, but because the weight of the empirical evidence made it increasingly difficult to adhere to it.

I was not alone in this. Today, with just a few heroic hold-outs, most sociologists of religion have given up on secularisation theory. Some time ago I saw a bumper sticker in Boston that read: ‘Dear Mr Nietzsche, you’re dead. Yours very truly, God.’ That sums it up quite neatly.

The contemporary world is anything but secularised. On the contrary, it is furiously religious. In most of the world there are veritable explosions

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**ABOUT PETER L BERGER**

Professor Peter Berger is director of the Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs (CURA) of Boston University, and professor of sociology and theology at the same university. He has written numerous books on sociological theory, the sociology of religion, and third world development, which have been translated into dozens of foreign languages. His publications include *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective* (1963); *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (1966, with Thomas Luckmann); *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (1967); *The War Over the Family: Capturing the Middle Ground* (with Brigitte Berger, 1983); *The Capitalist Revolution: Fifty Propositions About Prosperity, Equality and Liberty* (1988); *The Capitalist Spirit: Toward a Religious Ethic of Wealth Creation* (editor, 1990); *Modernity, Pluralism and the Crisis of Meaning* (with Thomas Luckmann, 1995); and *Redeeming Laughter: The Comic Dimension of Human Experience* (1997). In 1992 the Austrian government presented him with the Mannes Sperber Prize for significant contributions to culture. CURA is a research centre committed to the systematic study of relationships between economic development and sociocultural change in different parts of the world. Prof Berger has been its director since 1985.
of fervour in one form or another in all the major religious traditions: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and even Confucianism (if one wants to call it a religion – which I would), and in many places an imaginative synthesis of one or more world religions with indigenous faiths, for example, in the so-called African Initiated Churches (AICs). Obviously I cannot present you here with a full picture of all these developments. Let me say something about two significant exceptions with regard to the statement that we live in a very religious world.

One exception is geographic, and involves western and central Europe. That is one area where, by and large, secularisation theory holds. For this reason I believe Europe is the most interesting problem for the sociologist of religion, not because it is so important but because exceptions always have to be explained. Unfortunately, I cannot do it here. Let me just say that Europeans typically believe modernity and secularity go together, which makes them, in their own minds, a cultural vanguard. They then marvel, often in a patronising way, about the stubborn religiosity of the United States, yet another case of American exceptionalism.

But they are wrong. America may be exceptional in many ways, some more attractive than others, but it is very religious – like most of the world. The exception is Europe. Incidentally, if one proposes that modernity means secularisation, the United States presents a particularly difficult case; it is difficult to argue that America is less modern than, say, Belgium.

The other exception is sociological, not geographic. There is an international intelligentsia that is indeed heavily secularised. Again, I cannot go into the reasons for this, but this phenomenon has much to do with the long-lasting plausibility of secularisation theory. When intellectuals travel, they tend to meet other intellectuals. They feel at home with them and will – at least at first – assume that the foreign interlocutors represent the foreign culture as a whole. That, of course, is a terrible mistake. Sweden may indeed be similar to the Faculty Club of the University of Stockholm, but India is not at all like the Faculty Club of Delhi University. And, for that matter, the Harvard Faculty Club is certainly not representative of America.

**Modern capitalism**

What does all this have to do with development? Among sociologists the best-known work by Max Weber is his essay *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Published in the early years of the 20th century, it has been extensively debated ever since. Weber argued that one of the crucial factors explaining the birth of modern capitalism was a particular morality brought about unintentionally by Protestantism, especially by its Calvinist variant. Weber’s argument continues to be highly relevant in looking at the cultural prerequisites of development today, regardless of whether he was correct in his historical thesis about the Protestant reformation and its consequences.
The relevance of this becomes clear if one takes apart the elements of what he meant by the Protestant ethic, which shows that these elements are not necessarily linked to the particular religious tradition that began in Europe in the 16th century. The key feature of this ethic is what Weber called an inner-worldly asceticism, which he thought was present in Protestantism and absent in every other tradition he examined. Asceticism in the sense of systematic self-denial can be found throughout the history of religion. The distinct feature of Protestantism, Weber believed, was that its asceticism was expressed in worldly activities, especially in the religiously serious pursuit of economic enterprise.

This contrasts sharply with the asceticism of Catholic Monasticism, in terms of which ascetic practices were pursued in the service of other worldly goals. Weber put this rather neatly by saying that the reformation abolished the monasteries, but then turned the world into a monastery.

But what does this other inner-worldly asceticism amount to in terms of actual everyday behaviour? This is not difficult to describe. It is a morally charged work ethic; a highly rational approach to the world; an approach to the world that is free of magic; a systematic, disciplined ordering of all of life, extending to consumption as well as production, best summed up by the psychological concept of delayed gratification. Overall, this implies frugality, a sober rejection of all frivolous expenditures, and consequently a high rate of savings. Add to this a very positive attitude towards general education, motivated by the belief that everyone should be able to read the Bible, and you see the puritan as the perfect embodiment of what Weber had in mind.

This type of Protestant played an important role in the economic and social development of the Western world. The abovementioned characteristics can be divorced from this particular religious context; yet one can readily agree with Weber that such an ethic, whatever its religious legitimations, is likely to create attitudes and habits that are very functional in the early stages of modern economic development.

People who behave in this way are prone to become entrepreneurs. Give them a generation or so, and they are likely to be lifted out of poverty into some sort of middle-class affluence. Furthermore, give a comparable time span in the community or society in which such enterprise expands, and you are likely to see the proverbial take-off into successful capitalist development.

Obviously there will be other factors that determine success or failure in any specific case: macroeconomic, domestic, international, political, environmental. Thus you can be as puritan as you want, but you will get nowhere if you are located in a place with no natural resources, governed by an exploitative tyranny, and prevented from trading whatever products you have with the outside world. In other words, the right behaviour is important, but its effects can be either enhanced or nullified by other factors.

A quick side remark. When I say ‘right behaviour’, I am not implying a positive moral judgement of my own. The behaviour is ‘right’ only in the sense of its socioeconomic
function. Personally, I am not inclined towards any sort of puritan behaviour, much preferring a more indulgent lifestyle, but then I would make a lousy capitalist.

Back to Protestantism. Whatever the historical correctness of Weber’s extensive studies of world religions, one may agree that he was at least right in seeing Protestantism as one important factor among others in the genesis of modern capitalism. In other words, Protestantism helped, and it still does.

Compared with the more sedate Lutheran Reformed and Anglican branches, Evangelical Protestantism in general today accounts for the most dynamic branches of the tradition emanating from the Reformation. Meanwhile, Pentecostalism is by far the most dynamic element in the broader Evangelical community. Its growth and present scope are breathtaking. There have been Proto-Pentecostal phenomena throughout Christian history: charismatic leadership, highly emotional worship, speaking in tongues, spiritual healing. Indeed, this goes back to the earliest period when the disciples of Jesus gathered for Pentecost in Jerusalem and, according to the Book of Acts, the Holy Spirit descended upon them with miraculous effects.

But modern Pentecostalism is generally dated from 1906 when the so-called Azusa Street Revival took place. It was then that the highly charismatic African American Baptist Minister, William J Seymour, came out of Texas and started preaching in a Los Angeles slum. In a very short time he succeeded in gathering a sizeable congregation which was interracial from the beginning – no small feat in early 20th century California. Uniting with similar congregations elsewhere, missionaries went out from Azusa Street and very successfully spread the movement throughout the United States.

**Pentecostalism and ethics**

But the big global expansion of Pentecostalism began after World War Two. Originally sparked by American missionaries, it has become thoroughly indigenised almost everywhere. Today Pentecostalism is a massive presence in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and parts of Asia, with some surprising outposts elsewhere, such as among European Gypsies and among Hill tribes in India.

This is a phenomenon that resists precise quantification. It is much too diffused, spontaneous, and frequently unorganised beyond its groups. But the probable scope is awe-inspiring. The most conservative estimate is that there are 250 million Pentecostals worldwide, and more liberal estimates go up to 400 million. Whichever estimate is right, this must be the fastest-growing movement in the history of religion.

For those of you as yet unfamiliar with Pentecostalism, I strongly recommend the various publications of David Martin, beginning with his pioneering book *Fire from Heaven: The Explosion of Pentecostalism in Latin America* (1990), the research for which I’m proud to say was supported by the Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs (CURA), our research centre at Boston University.
The point I want to make is simple. This is not a phenomenon among many in the contemporary religious scene; it is by far the biggest and the most explosive, and yet many people in academia and the media are totally unaware of it. It is, if you will allow the metaphor, the elephant in the living room.

But that is not why I bring it up here. Rather, I bring it up because in my opinion Pentecostalism exhibits precisely the features of the Protestant ethic that are functional for modern economic development. To be sure, Pentecostals are not puritans. They are far too exuberant, and they have characteristics that would have appalled the Puritans, beginning with speaking in tongues. But they do correspond to the aforementioned elements of an inner-worldly asceticism; hard work, frugality, delayed gratification, and so on. Because of this, I will venture the following simple but far-reaching proposition: Pentecostalism should be viewed as a positive resource for modern economic development.

A moment’s reflection will lead to the insight that not all religious traditions are equally functional in terms of economic development. Indeed, after publishing his essay on Protestantism, Weber spent much of the rest of his career exploring other religious traditions, notably those of India and China, and concluding, rightly or wrongly (in some cases, clearly wrongly), that they lacked a particular combination of traits he called inner-worldly asceticism. Some he thought were ascetic but not inner-worldly, others inner-worldly but not ascetic.

It should again be emphasised that distinguishing between economically functional and dysfunctional religious traditions in no way implies a moral or theological value judgement. One may be passionately committed to a particular faith, and yet concede that it doesn’t fit very well with a modern economy. After all, economics is hardly the main concern of any religion. Conversely, to acknowledge the socio-economic functionality of a religion says nothing about its veridical status or moral worth.

Religious contrasts
Weber himself, and quite a few others since then, have contrasted the Protestant ethic with Catholic morality. As one looks at the most dramatic explosion of Pentecostalism in our own time, the one in Latin America, this contrast has a good deal of plausibility. Conversion to Pentecostalism carries with it a cultural revolution, a turning point away from deeply ingrained traits of Latin American culture, such as those pertaining to the status of women, the education of children, habits of work and leisure, and a general heathenism.

These traits are not necessarily linked to the Catholic faith, but they were, for a long time, embedded in a specific culture, shaped by Iberian Catholicism, that was not conducive to modern economic enterprise. It is therefore all the more instructive to look at the case where the Weberian cultural package arose within a deeply Catholic milieu, in Spain no less. This is the case of Opus Dei. It arose in Spain in the 1920s as a movement adhering to the robustly conservative Catholicism. It created a semi-
monastic order comprising both clergy and laity, but it was the lay component that made Opus Dei distinctive and influential.

The order deliberately targeted elite individuals in government, business, the media, and intellectual life. These individuals were supposed to infuse these institutions with a Catholic spirit, and to a remarkable extent they did. Here was a vociferously Catholic institution that closely exhibited the inner-worldly asceticism as described by Weber. It flourished under the Franco regime, and members of Opus Dei came to occupy influential positions in government.

At some point in the late Franco period, the order decided that Spain needed a modern market economy. It influenced the regime in a pro-market direction and, among other things, created the first Spanish business school. They did all this without becoming any less Catholic. Thus the Spanish economic miracle of the post-Franco period is in no small measure due to the influence of Opus Dei.

If you like, one can be very Catholic theologically and quasi-Protestant economically, rather a case of man bites dog. I doubt very much whether Opus Dei realised at the beginning of this process that the marketisation of the economy would bring with it a democratisation of the political system, but then another of Weber’s timeless contributions is his law of unintended consequences.

Looking at developing societies today, it would at first seem as if Islam holds back the societies in which it holds sway. There are a number of traits of Muslim societies that give credence to this notion, notably the status of women, the conservative character of Islamic education, and the reluctance to separate any social institution, including the state and the economy, from religion.

Many Muslim thinkers have argued that these traits are not intrinsic to Islam, but are due to cultural influences that antedate Islam, or were arbitrarily introduced into the cultures in question. This may well be the case, but the fact remains that many of these traits are legitimated in Islamic terms, and are indeed impediments to development. The inferior status of women is a glaring example of this, and offers a sharp contrast to Pentecostalism, which can be described quite accurately as a movement that emancipates women, for example, in opposition to Latin American machismo.

It is dysfunctional in terms of development if half the population is effectively denied higher education, and is thus barred from the modern labour force. The importance of this contrast becomes clear as one reflects that resurgent Islam is the other great religious explosion of our time, affecting millions of people from the Atlantic Ocean to the China Sea, a geographical scope nearly as vast as that of Pentecostalism. Yet one would have to be much more cautious if one were to propose that, just like Pentecostalism, resurgent Islam is a resource for development – yet it can be. An important case of this possibility can be found in Indonesia, the most populous Muslim majority country, and thus no minor fringe case.
As in other Muslim countries, Indonesia too has a large system of Islamic schools known there as Pesantren. Some, to be sure, have a traditionally conservative curriculum that does little to prepare its graduates for the modern world. But a significant number of Pesantren under the aegis of a Muslim movement with millions of members, the so-called Nadhatul Ulama, have gone in a very different direction. Along with traditional religious instruction, these schools have developed a modern curriculum, including natural science and the social sciences.

Breaking with traditional prohibitions of modern banking, the schools have created fellowships for young Muslims to train in banks, many of them owned by non-Muslim ethnic Chinese. They have also engaged in civic education, advocating the rights of women, pluralism, and democracy. In other words, here is a case in which modern attitudes and behaviour are legitimated in Islamic terms. Indeed, a certain similarity with Opus Dei suggests itself.

In another of his well-known essays, Max Weber argued that Confucianism, a prime case for him of non-ascetic inner-worldliness, was inimical to modern economic enterprise. Weber died in 1921. He would be rather surprised if he woke up today in contemporary Singapore, Hong Kong, or Shanghai. His argument probably holds for the Confucian Mandarins of Imperial China, the ones he called literary intellectuals. It emphatically does not hold for the overseas Chinese, arguably the most economically successful group in the contemporary world. Their success is now being replicated in mainland China. They have been the subject of the so-called post-Confucian hypothesis, which has proposed that Confucian values were instrumental for the economic miracles of East Asia. But this was not the Confucianism of Imperial China, but rather what Robert Beller has called Bourgeois Confucianism.

It is debatable whether Confucianism is to be credited with all of this, or whether one should look at Chinese folk religion and family ethos, which antedate and indeed underlie Confucian morality. Be this as it may, here is a value system clearly exhibiting the Weberian package but certainly not Protestant in religious content. I would again refer you to a book based on research supported by CURA: *The Spirit of Chinese Capitalism* by Gordon Redding.

I believe Japan is a vital case for any theory of development in general, and an understanding of the role of religion in particular. Japan was the first non-western society to modernise successfully, and it did so amazingly rapidly. In 1854 Commodore Perry of the US Navy sailed into Tokyo Bay and forced Japan to open up to international trade, a profound shock for a country that had carefully isolated itself for several centuries on the assumption that extensive contacts with foreigners would undermine its traditional ways.

The response to this shock was remarkable. In 1868 the Meiji Restoration took place; rather a misnomer, it was in fact a coup d’état that simply used the Meiji Emperor as a figurehead. The oligarchs in charge of the new regime systematically went about the project of modernising Japanese society – radically so, but without giving up
its cultural distinctiveness. In a process that must be unique in history, emissaries were sent out to the major countries of Europe and America in order to determine which institutions Japan ought to imitate. Feudalism was abolished, and a key group of former feudal lords were induced to become industrial and commercial entrepreneurs.

In the wake of the dismantling of feudal privileges, all Japanese citizens were made equal before the law. Universal education, at first only for male children, was instituted by an imperial edict. In just one generation the major social institutions – political, economic, military, educational – were thoroughly modernised. The dramatic proof of the success of this modernising process came in 1905 when Japan defeated Russia, one of the major European powers, on land and on sea.

Yet throughout this social revolution central features of Japanese culture were preserved – in the family, in relations between the genders and the generations, in conventions of status and deference, in manners and aesthetics, and last not least, in religion. More than that, religion played a role in legitimating the modernising transformation.

Japanese religion had long been a very non-monotheistic mix of three traditions: Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism. All three had been important in the ethos of the Samurai, the old warrior cast at the top of the feudal hierarchy. Yet this was precisely the stratum from which the new capitalist leadership was recruited. What happened here was a remarkable modernisation and, as it were, democratisation of this erstwhile military feudal ethos. Respect for authority, deep loyalty to the group, and personal discipline and frugality, all rooted in traditional culture, became features of a highly functional ideology of modern economic behaviour. Indeed, what one may observe here is a faithful reiteration of what I have called the Weberian package.

Tradition can change

The nature of the modernising transformation is very interesting indeed. What had been the ethic of an elite became an ethic for all Japanese: that is what I meant by speaking of democratisation. And loyalty to the feudal lord became loyalty to the firm, leading to the peculiar features of Japanese business until very recently: the employer solidarity known as groupism, the so-called lifetime employment, even the obsession with quality control, the meticulousness of the tea ceremony transposed to the factory floor.

I will take the liberty of a self-advertisement here. CURA has been studying the relation of religious faith and development for more than 20 years in different parts of the world. It would not be altogether misleading to call our work an exercise in neo-Weberianism, though hopefully without a dogmatic adherence to Weber.

I have mentioned the research on Pentecostalism and the Chinese business ethic. I could mention many more other studies, among them, by the way, a study of Opus Dei. It has never been our intention to produce a full-blown theory of the relationship between religion and socioeconomic change – our orientation has been much too
empirical for such an ambition. However, there are a few conclusions from our research that are relevant to the topic of this lecture.

The first is that religious traditions are malleable. Contrary to the view of many theologians, no religious tradition consists of an unchanging body of cognitive and normative definitions of reality. To be sure, every tradition has a core of beliefs and/or practices which are indeed transmitted from one generation to another. But no tradition is carried through history as an inert entity.

A Swedish school of religious scholarship has called the exploration of this phenomenon Motif Research. But even such key motifs, let alone more peripheral items in the tradition, are subject to interpretation and re-interpretation. This also goes for those elements of the tradition that have socioeconomic consequences. Thus it is not advisable ever to say Tradition X is functional for development but Tradition Y is not, because Tradition X could be reinterpreted in such a way as to lose its functionality, and Tradition Y reinterpreted in the reverse direction. Our brief discussion of Catholicism and Islam illustrates this point. This does not change the fact that in any particular moment in history adherence to Tradition X may indeed have a comparative advantage over adherence to Tradition Y when it comes to development.

Second, the socioeconomic potential of the religious tradition may be latent for long periods of time until triggered by some new set of circumstances. Confucianism presents us with such a case. When, as in Imperial China, Confucian education meant endless study of classic texts and the cultivation of such skills as painting dragons on silk, it did not encourage attitudes and habits conducive to modern economic activity. But the potential of the tradition was dramatically triggered by emigration. Freed from the familial and legal inhibitions in their home country, emigrant Chinese in Indonesia or the Philippines developed a post-Confucian ethic that served to inspire the veritable explosion of modern entrepreneurship.

Communist China, like Imperial China, inhibited this potential, but the economic reforms of the last decades have produced a triggering effect of their own. Today, a post-Confucian ethic is as visible in Shanghai as in Manila. Gordon Redding’s *Spirit of Chinese Capitalism* now flourishes under a flag that is still, rather incongruously, red.

Decline of asceticism

Third, the socioeconomic effects of a religious tradition typically have an expiration date. In other words, these effects may not only be latent, but are likely to be perishable once they have become manifest. This is probably the case with the Japanese economic ethic. The features of the ethic that we have just examined were certainly highly functional as industrial capitalism took off and matured in Japan. It is much more doubtful whether this functionality persists, as the Japanese economy is increasingly post-industrial and knowledge-driven.
Groupism and all this entails may now be downright dysfunctional, as the economy needs people who are much more individualistic, consumption-oriented, even dreamy. Similarly, the Protestant ethic of Pentecostalism is certainly functional for people taking the first steps into a modern economy, as with the case of European and American Protestants described by Weber. Will this ethic be just as functional when these people succeed in terms of social mobility, and when their society has entered a post-industrial phase? Probably not. Indeed, one may generalise that whereas asceticism is functional in the early phases of modern economic development, it becomes dispensable, perhaps even dysfunctional, in later phases.

In the latter, societies become so productive that asceticism becomes less important, and all sorts of non-productive or hedonistic lifestyles become tolerable. It has occurred to me more than once that a society that can afford me must be remarkably affluent, and thus not in need of an economically productive contribution on my part.

Fourth, economic development is typically initiated by a vanguard. It is not necessary for development to take place in such a way that the entire population of a society evinces these Weberian virtues. Usually it is a relatively small group that first behaves in this way. If that group is successful, it will expand in size, and eventually the entire society, or at any rate most of it, will reap the benefits. Needless to say, the vanguard will benefit ahead of the others. This is likely to be a source of envy and resentment. If the vanguard is different in religion or ethnicity from the majority of the population, the resentment can become politically powerful. There will be the inclination to discriminate against, expropriate, expel, or - in the extreme case - destroy the vanguard.

Quite apart from moral considerations, this is typically tantamount to killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. Thus Eastern Europe suffered economically from its persecution of the Jews, as did South East Asia from its recurring anti-Chinese actions, and Uganda from the expulsion of its Indian middle class. While it is possible to persecute capitalists, it is not possible to expropriate the spirit of capitalism.

Fifth, modernity can come in different forms. Modernisation theorists of the 1950s tended to think that modernity came in one seamless package. Not surprisingly, this package looked pretty much like the western societies from which the theorists came. I have called this theory the electric toothbrush theory of development: drop an electric toothbrush into the middle of the jungle, and after a generation the place will look like Cleveland or Düsseldorf.

This theory was mistaken; modernity does not come in one version only. But there is a kernel of truth in it as well, in that there are certain attitudes and habits without which modernity cannot arise or persist. Broadly speaking, these are the rational mindsets and behaviour patterns without which modern science, technology, and bureaucratic administration cannot exist. These are indeed the same everywhere, and are western in origin. I have called these the intrinsic features of modernity.
But then there are a large number of extrinsic features that can vary greatly from one country to another. Let me provide a simple illustration. The attitude and behaviour necessary for an individual to pilot an airliner are everywhere the same. Unless they prevail, the airliner will crash. But this pertains to what takes place in the cockpit. In contrast, the decor of the passenger cabin, the music piped through the PA system, and the dress and demeanour of the flight attendants can be freely varied according to different cultural tastes. More importantly, when he is in the cockpit, our pilot must behave in a rigorously western way. But when he is off duty and goes home, there is no reason why he cannot revert to indigenous ways that are not western at all.

Enlarge this illustration to an entire society. You get what Shmuel Eisenstadt has called multiple modernities. Japan is still the most compelling example of this. It is a modern society, in some ways more modern than any in the west, but with a distinctive culture of its own. Of course, this culture is changing. For instance, it becomes less groupy, more individualistic, but there is no chance that any time in the future Kyoto will look like Cleveland or Düsseldorf.

Let me conclude. I think it is useful for those engaged in development policy to reflect on what an alternate modernity could or should look like in whatever society they are focused on. There has been intensive reflection about this in Japan ever since the Meiji period. There is a very interesting reflection about this going on in China today. One of the most important questions that should be asked is what an Islamic modernity could or should be, a question important not only for Muslims but for all of us.

Such reflection can be quite a sober affair, free of nostalgic or romantic ideology. I would suggest that something like this is a useful exercise in Africa: what a distinctively African modernity could or should be. It is not for me to hold forth on this, but I’m quite sure of one thing: however one may want to answer the question, one will do well to take religion, and Pentecostalism in particular, into account.

**RESPONSE BY PROF MATTHEWS OJO**

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I would like to express my appreciation to Prof Peter Berger for his interesting discussion of the link between religion and development. After providing a brief summary of some of the points he has made, I would like to pose three questions.

Prof Berger began by referring to Max Weber’s thesis that links Protestantism to the development of capitalism in Europe. According to Weber, the Protestant ethic was linked to, or to some extent promoted, economic development. The Protestant ethic was defined as a sense of ascetism; a disciplined and orderly life; frugality; and a positive attitude towards education. However, Weber suggested that what could be
found in Protestantism would not be found in other religions, and this is something Prof Berger has highlighted.

For example, Islam, with its absolutism and conservatism, does not stand or follow the pattern suggested by Weber. However, Prof Berger has pointed out that this may not be true for Indonesia, because this country, with a very large majority of Muslims, has transformed itself into an economically developed nation.

Furthermore, while it may not be generally true of Catholicism, he has given the example of the Opus Dei Society, which has followed the same pattern as Protestantism. So what he has sought to suggest is that not all religious traditions are equally functional in terms of economic development: some are, some are not. So what we are saying is that we cannot make any generalisation about the link between religion and development, because the circumstances change from time to time and from generation to generation.

I would also like to draw attention to the conclusions drawn by Prof Berger from the research carried out by CURA. The first is that religious traditions are flexible or malleable, and our religious beliefs and traditions are subject to interpretation and reinterpretation by successive generations. The implication of this is that we cannot say that one religion or one religious tradition has any functional advantage in terms of development over another; every religion or religious tradition will stand on the same level when it comes to economic development.

The second is that the socioeconomic potential of religious tradition may be latent for a long period of time, and may only be triggered by some set of circumstances.

Following on from this, my first question is: What are the conditions that will trigger the latent function of religion or religious tradition in respect of economic development? My purpose in asking this is to bring the discussion to what conditions could trigger the latent function in respect of economic development of African Pentecostalism, African religion, or African Independent Churches, or any form of African religion, bearing in mind that Africa and Africans have experienced almost all known social circumstances such as war, starvation, migration, ethnic conflicts, religious conflicts, failed and collapsed states, failed economies, and so on.

Secondly, Prof Berger has argued that there is no single form of modernity; there are various kinds. That is why Islam has not retarded economic growth in Indonesia, nor Confucianism in China, and so on. My question here is briefly: what will be the distinctive kind of modernity that could be called African? And will the African religions, whether African Pentecostalism or African Independent Churches, contribute towards this distinctive African modernity?

Lastly, Prof Berger has argued that Pentecostalism should be viewed as a positive resource for modern economic development. Flowing from this, my third question is: world regions where Pentecostalism is growing fast – notably Latin America and...
Africa - have not exhibited significant economic growth. Would he want to reconsider this aspect of his thesis?

**DISCUSSION**

A member of the audience asked Prof Berger to comment on the relationship between the individual and collective societal consciousness in the process of economic development. He had alluded to the many characteristics of Pentecostalism and even Islam related to development, but did the potential for societal development not arise from an awareness among individuals of the value of the Socratic virtues – modesty, honesty, truthfulness, and so on? The question was related to the widespread popular disillusionment with the quality of political and other leadership in contemporary society.

A second questioner said he wanted to ‘destabilise’ the idea of development. Prof Berger’s lecture had assumed a wholly positive value for development against which the functionality of religion could be tested, yet what religion did was to make normative assumptions about what development should be. This issue was illustrated by Prof Berger’s reference to Japan as a case combining cultural continuity and a marked transformation to modernity. By contrast, given the mass destruction of Buddhist temples within three years of the Meiji Restoration, was it not the case that, rather than a simple continuity, the breaking down of the powers of Buddhism had enabled development in Japan? Furthermore, part, or the outcome, of that developmental process was massive Imperial expansion, and Japan waging wars in Asia. In other words, this was not just a case of economic development, but also a form of political development that had inflicted enormous damage and caused enormous harm. So what was the precise economic package to which the functionality of religion was being related?

A third questioner asked whether, in light of Prof Berger’s stress on the dynamic and malleable nature of religion, it could be argued that religion tended to respond to economic change rather than cause it.

**Responses to questions**

Responding, Prof Berger commented initially on the relationship between individualism and individuality on the one hand, and modernity on the other. He proposed that this was extrinsic to development, for the Japanese example demonstrated that it was possible to have modernisation of a highly collectivistic – or communitarian – kind. It was only more recently that Japanese culture had become increasingly individualistic. Indeed, this demonstrated the wider point that as modernity proceeded, it led to a process of individuation, for the simple reason that modernity undermined the kind of traditional society within which the individual could really merge himself with the community.

It was dangerous to put the idea of development on a pedestal, and judge everything else in relation to it. Nonetheless, the notion of development, as generally conceived,
embodied two features. One was the factor of economic growth, without which development could not occur. The other was some sort of equitable distribution of the results of such growth.

It was possible for a society to ‘destabilise’ this notion of development in the sense of saying that it did not particularly want it. However, contrary to the views of critics of modernity such as Ivan Illich, with whom he had worked earlier in his career, modernity had its blessings. Therefore, in contrast to those who wanted to get away from the notions of development and modernity, he would respond with the simple proposition that whereas in all pre-modern societies most children died before they were five years old, the most important demographic consequence of modernisation was that most people lived into adulthood. Clearly, most people would agree that they did not want to go back to a state of society in which most children died. In short, development was a very desirable goal, at least from the perspective of the values which he himself held. Some people might choose to think that some monastic, mystical ideal was more important than children living, but that was not his view.

As regards the relationship between development and the Meiji Restoration, Berger agreed that the latter did indeed break with a number of elements of tradition, not least of which was its elevation of Shinto into a kind of state ideology. While one could question whether the destruction of Buddhism was as extensive as the questioner had suggested, the Restoration certainly did de-emphasise Buddhism, and transformed Shintoism into an ideology with terrible results in the 1930s and 1940s. Yet this did not detract from the fact that the Meiji Restoration produced a modern society which kept alive and dynamic very traditional elements of Japanese culture, which with some modifications, continued until the present day.

With regard to whether religion simply responded to modernising social change rather than causing it, Berger replied that both relationships were often at play. Certainly, when discussing the connection between religion and economic development, Weber did not claim that Protestantism was the only or major cause of modern economic development in Europe and North America. He would rather argue that it was a very important factor, in conjunction with others, in terms of international economic developments and in terms of politics. The term he used in German was that it was a critical element, Kritische Spitze. Without that element, one might still have had modern capitalism, but it would have looked very different.

A questioner asked whether Prof Berger was advising policy-makers to think about using religion as a vehicle for economic development. Yet this represented something of a paradox. On the one hand, many religions were collectivist; on the other, capital tended to destroy religions and religious traditions, and thrust them into a private sphere. Was it not therefore rather opportunistic to use religion in support of a cause which would bring about its own destruction?
Another questioner referred to Berger’s statement that the media and academia were not aware of the positive effects of religion, especially Pentecostalism. What was the reason for this? Was it deliberate, or just out of ignorance? And what did this mean for development policy? If academics and the media were not fully engaging with religious movements, especially Pentecostalism, did this affect policy in any way?

Paraphrasing the popular question ‘What’s love got to do with it?’ another questioner asked: what does religion have to do with it? He did so from the perspective of a range of literature over the past 20 years or so about what Robert Bellah would call ‘habits of the heart’, what Putnam would call social capital, or Fukuyama, trust. He was therefore wondering whether the discussion was actually about cultural systems that extended beyond religion per se. For instance, in The Second Industrial Divide: Possibilities for Prosperity, Michael Piore and Charles Sabel argued that northern Italy was better able to adapt to post-industrial development because of its culture (as against that of the south). This seemed to relate to the latter part of Prof Berger’s paper, in which he referred to the difficulty that religion had in adapting to post-industrial society.

The questioner also asked whether or not development was facilitated in countries such as Taiwan more by the geo-politics of the 20th century than by religion.

Responding to the first question – whether capitalism would use religion but then destroy it by relegating it to the private sphere – Prof Berger said religion was by no means confined to the private sphere by modern conditions. In the influential recent book Public Religions in the Modern World, José Casanova, a sociologist of religion in the United States originally from Spain, examined a number of cases where, even under modern conditions, religion played a very public role. So while it was true that religion had been relegated to the private sphere in certain areas, notably Europe, it had not suffered that fate in other places, and not at all in the United States, where despite a rather rigorous separation of church and state, religion played a very important part in the public sphere. So he disagreed strongly with the notion that capitalism, modernity or development necessarily pushed religion into a private sphere, let alone eventually liquidated it or destroyed it in some fashion.

On the issue of why Pentecostalism was so invisible to academics and journalists, he returned to what he had said at the beginning of his lecture, which was that there was an intellectual internationale which was indeed quite secular. Why this is the case was a very complicated matter, but this was dealt with at length by David Martin in A General Theory of Secularization (1978) and in On Secularization: Towards a Revised Theory (2005), both of which questioned the inevitability of secularisation in modern societies and which argued, among other things, that Pentecostalism was a revolution that was not supposed to happen because it did not fit in with the secular mindset of intellectuals. This myopia on the part of intellectuals was bad for two reasons. One was that it is always bad when something really important is overlooked. The other was that this overlooked, and therefore inhibited, a potentially highly significant source of social capital.
Responding to the third question, Berger agreed that it was certainly necessary to look beyond religion for an understanding of society. Many factors came into play, and sometimes it was very difficult to disentangle what was religious in its origin or content, and what was not. Perhaps the most useful thing to say was that the kind of religion embedded in a particular culture differed from one case to another, but in most societies it was impossible to understand the culture, including such things as trust and social capital, unless one understood its religious history.

Prof David Martin, professor emeritus of the sociology of religion at the London School of Economics, was asked to comment. He said he would focus on causal sequences in social development, and the nature of religion in relation to conflict. Prof Berger was correct when he treated religions as overlapping repertoires built into civilisations; they actually did make certain processes or developments more likely, and then actually accelerated them. This was a complicated cybernetic feedback, illustrating that the notion that simple causal chains were not really viable in the social sciences.

Furthermore, it was necessary to consider what the elements in the repertoire were, because these were formed very far back. Karl Jaspers argued that certain social elements or processes might take 1 000 or even 2 000 years to come to fruition. In this regard, three factors were particularly relevant.

The first was that of interiority, the sense that the inside of a person mattered as much as external observance. If these two ideas were conjoined, that as a man was in his heart, so he was, this took one right back to Judaism. If one then added the idea of being born again – that one could alter one’s situation by an inner transformation – this was a very important possibility.

**Interior life and conflict**

As Berger had mentioned, such a combination was only one among a number of elements. It was possible to have a situation where people were born again, and where interior life mattered, but where its effects were suppressed by other conditions.

The second factor was that of peace, which the repertoire of religion included very adamantly. Consequently, it became a major problem as to why religions were associated with conflict. One important reason was that every form of solidarity was a potential source of conflict. Whether one was talking about political ideologies or about religion, every plus carried a huge cost, and so it was not paradoxical at all that the most fundamental forms of solidarity were also connected with most fundamental forms of conflict. Nevertheless, the idea or ideal of peace had been inserted into the repertoire.

This connected with the point about the communitarian nature of religion, because religion set up these new repertoires in different combinations, but these are very frequently pulled back into the fundamental nature of religion in society.
For example, Christianity was an interior, peaceful, and voluntaristic religion. Russian Orthodoxy was not a voluntaristic religion, but a folk religion; it emphasised external observance and, from time to time, the Russian Ecclesiastics blessed Christ-loving soldiery in Russian imperial expansion. Where, then, did some of the motifs for Russian industrialisation come from? They came from the old believers, who were at one and the same time a voluntary minority and a minority within the wider scene. Thus in Moscow in the 19th century Russian business was very connected with old believers. They also built the picture galleries – the main gallery of Russian art was actually funded by an old believer. Similarly, Rembrandt’s paintings were promoted by the Mennonites, despite them being a deeply anti-iconic group. So it was necessary to consider what kind of minority one was talking about, its circumstances, and how it was using its own repertoire. Both the Jews and the Armenians were very relevant here.

**Voluntarism**

The final point was related to voluntarism. This went right against the fundamental communitarian idea by creating a voluntary spiritual brotherhood against an involuntary national or tribal community. That was a huge change, for once these things become voluntary they could become entrepreneurial in the sense that one could go around and collect one’s own followers – a highly entrepreneurial act. So there was a relationship between voluntary international entrepreneurship in the field of religion, and entrepreneurship on an international scale in the sphere of economics. There was a strong symbolic connection.

Pentecostalism had all these different characteristics. It was adamantly peaceful, and the reason why people did not know about it was that nobody was being killed. The media did not care about millions of people saying they were peaceful, as this wasn’t news. Furthermore, as Berger had said, Pentecostals were in the wrong part of town. This was as true of Santiago as it was of Johannesburg – that Pentecostal churches were characterised by an incredible presence in their densest and down-at-heel parts. The social capital being created was voluntary.

So one now had a transnational voluntaristic group that was leaping across national and cultural borders, and was making an enormous difference to people’s lives.

Prof Berger said he wanted to add to the discussion about religion and conflict, as well as about voluntarism. Of course it is the case that religion could produce conflict. Intellectuals usually liked to look at root causes, and because most intellectuals were secularised they did not believe that people were motivated by religion; they looked at economic class, or similar factors. In some cases they were right; there were instances where religion simply served to legitimate interests that were not religious in origin, but were rooted in class, ethnicity, nation, and so on. But in other cases religious motives had to be taken seriously. An obvious example was that of a radical Islamic suicide bomber. When somebody blew himself up, he said *Allahu Akbar!* before he released the bomb, and did so in the expectation of being a martyr.
doing what God wanted him to do and waking up in paradise a moment later. It was not plausible to question his or her religious motive.

Religion could also play a different role in conflict situations, with examples provided by the former Yugoslavia and Northern Ireland. The American satirical writer P J O’Rourke visited Bosnia during the worst of the conflict, and wrote that it contained three groups: they were all of the same race, all looked alike, and all spoke the same language. They only differed by religion, in which none of them believed.

In Northern Ireland, Protestants and Catholics had previously killed each other with a certain amount of enthusiasm. Was this genuinely because of religion, or because of other factors? The following story from Belfast illustrated this difficulty: A man walks down a dark street in Belfast and a gunman jumps out from a doorway, holds a gun to his head and says: ‘Are you Protestant or Catholic?’ and the man says: ‘Well, actually, I’m an atheist.’ And the man says: ‘Yes, but are you a Protestant atheist or a Catholic atheist?’ This demonstrated the difficulties of analysing the role of religion in supposedly religious conflicts.

As regards voluntarism, Prof Berger noted that Pentecostalism constituted an international network of people with a voluntaristic notion of religion, for nobody was born a Pentecostal. A person had to become a Pentecostal, at least in the first generation.

What did this mean in terms of modernity? As he had remarked previously, modernity necessarily undermined the kind of communitarian identity which had predominated through most of history. It made people make choices, choices of occupation, of marriage, even now of sexual identity, and certainly of religion. Now what that meant was that even religious traditions which used to be communitarian and monopolistic became voluntary associations, whether they liked it or not, the Catholic church being a prime example. In terms of theology, certainly. Catholicism to this day had a great difficulty considering itself a voluntary association. But in democratic countries where there is religious liberty, in societies in which there is religious pluralism, whether they like it or not, Catholics have been dragged into a situation in which their church, in effect has become a voluntary association. This has also happened in the extreme case of Judaism. If ever there has been a communitarian, non-voluntaristic religion, through most of its history, it has been Judaism. Yet what has happened in the United States? Democratic, freedom of religion, pluralistic society. Today there are three, or depending on how you count, four Jewish denominations. So American Jews choose whether they are going to be conservative or reform or whatever.

A questioner observed that Prof Berger had offered a dramatic demonstration of what he saw as the value of modernity by pointing out the fact that people lived for far longer. Yet it would be interesting to know what he saw as the downsides of modernity over the past 150 to 200 years, and consequently, what aspects of religion could mitigate or work against the negative impacts of modernity. The United States, for instance, as a modern state, was engaging in a whole range of activities which
many people elsewhere regarded as horrendous. Meanwhile, depression was a principal form of illness in Western Europe. Surely, therefore, besides providing some wonderful benefits, modernity and development also raised difficult and intractable issues that had to be dealt with.

Another questioner asked Prof Berger how he defined or categorised Pentecostalism. He had spoken about dynamic worship and speaking in tongues, but these characteristics were also associated today with many other denominations, including Catholicism. Was Pentecostalism something that denominations defined themselves?

Another questioner returned to whether the issue of Pentecostalism was always a positive resource for modern economic development. Was it not necessary to add that Pentecostalism should be accompanied by the notion of transcendence? This point was illustrated by Africa. If an African Pentecostalist viewed his environment, for example a tree, as the dwelling place of one of his gods or one of the ancestral spirits, he would not view that tree as something he could economically exploit, by using the timber, for example. So should the notion of Pentecostalism not be accompanied by the notion of transcendence held by the puritans, and also perhaps by American Pentecostals? It seemed unlikely that this would be the case in Africa.

A final questioner asked why, given the Pentecostal revolution in Africa, the continent was still experiencing such dire poverty and multiple social ills.

Responding, Prof Berger said that as a Viennese, Lutheran and Weberian sociologist, he came from three powerful traditions of pessimism, and recognised that there was a downside to modernity. Yet religion could serve as a critique of certain elements of any society, including a modern society. The relationships of parents and children were one example of the downside of the erosion of traditional values associated with modernity. When parents looked upon both their marriage and their relationship with their children as a contract similar to an employment contract, saying that they had particular rights and obligations, and that if the other did not meet them they were going to separate, there was a clear downside to modernity. Religious tradition, certainly Christian or Jewish traditions, counteracted this.

Also, the fact that there were negative aspects to modernity was not enough reason to give up either on the concept of development or on that modernity, nor would he retract from saying that if there was a choice between modernity and pre-modernity, or even post-modernity, in terms of the values he held, he would go with modernity. This was why he had great difficulty with Ivan Illich. The left originally loved Illich because he criticised capitalism and American cultural imperialism. He then criticised Cuba as an old-style tyranny, so the left was very disappointed – they had not appreciated that Illich’s critique of capitalism had come not from the left but from the right, and was emanating from an essentially pre-modern, almost medieval point of view.
As regards the definition of Pentecostalism, Berger reiterated that the boundaries between denominations and religious traditions could be quite fluid. Some people used the term charismatic Christianity, which was not quite the same as Pentecostalism. One was dealing with a spontaneous, dynamic phenomenon, much of which was not organised. A friend of his had once described established denominations as telephone directory organisations. If one wanted to know where the first Presbyterian Church was in a particular American city, one could look it up in the Yellow Pages under Churches Presbyterian. However, if one looked up Pentecostalism one would find a few Pentecostal churches, but this would not exhaust the presence of Pentecostalism, for it overflowed borders. So denominations were not easy to define, and it was not wise to be rigid about definitions. He would say about Pentecostalism what an American Supreme Court Judge had once said about pornography: ‘I can’t define it, but I know it when I see it.’

As regards transcendence, Berger agreed that if one believed a tree contained a spirit, and one must not do anything to disturb the spirit, one would certainly not cut it down. If that world view was extended to everything, then such a religion would not be conducive to modernisation and development because the world had to be accepted more or less as it was. Pentecostalism certainly denied that, and one saw this very clearly in the data from CDE’s study of Pentecostalism in South Africa. Pentecostals and adherents of African Independent Churches differed strongly on the issue of ancestors, the presence of spirits in the world, which Pentecostals by and large regarded as demonic. Pentecostalism was transcendent in the sense in which the three major monotheistic traditions were transcendent; in other words, God was not a part of nature, and therefore the Christian, Jew, or Muslim could cut down trees, which was useful.

CLOSING REMARKS

In closing, Ann Bernstein, CDE’s executive director, commented as follows:

CDE has published a report entitled *Under the Radar: Pentecostalism in South Africa and its potential social and economic role* (2008). It is intended to open up discussion in South Africa about the role of religion and development. This is an important project because the role of religion is largely ignored in public discussion and in the policy arena, despite the startling fact that religion is very important to more than 80 per cent of our population. A second point which has emerged from the investigation of Pentecostalism is the dynamism of this phenomenon in many communities, particularly poorer ones. This is in contrast to the growing sense of entitlement that is starting to pervade elements of South African society. In talking to congregants, pastors and others, CDE has found a real sense of agency; their religious conversion and involvement is turning them into people who are saying: ‘I can change my own life, and my own actions could make a difference to the betterment of my family, myself and my community.’

‘I can change my own life, and my own actions could make a difference to the betterment of my family, myself and my community’
This shows that we have hidden sources of social capital that nobody, least of all CDE, has been thinking about. One of the biggest scourges in South Africa today is crime, yet we have been meeting pastors and congregants who are trying to fight crime in their communities. Nothing is ever heard about their efforts in this regard, yet their activities are clearly important if we are to start turning the tide on this phenomenon.

Pentecostal churches are often ‘bottom-up’ institutions. An individual decides to ‘plant’ a church, and then has to attract congregants. The pastor is frequently accountable to that local community, and if they don’t approve of what he says or does or how he spends their donations, they are free to leave at any time. The voluntary and entrepreneurial nature of the ‘movement’ means that, at any time, a particular pastor could suffer a schism in his local community, with a future pastor and his followers walking away from his church and starting another one. This is a very direct form of local accountability, which raises interesting questions about the consequences of this experience for the communities and individuals involved. Is this pattern of behaviour carried over into the political sphere? Can these local level churches start to form ‘little platoons of democracy’ – where they start to apply principles of local accountability to local politicians or members of parliament, for example?

This research project has given CDE the unusual – and salutary – experience of looking outside the secular world of South African policy. We have learnt things about the country we did not know before. For example, Pentecostals save more money – proportionately – than any other group. In a country trying to encourage less consumption and more savings in the population, this is an important piece of news.

Ultimately, the largest social challenge facing South Africa is the integration of the divided, unequal, and alienated sectors of our economy and society. Of all the denominations, Pentecostal churches are probably best able to reach out to South Africa’s marginalised communities. Could it be that the ‘African Renaissance’ will be driven more effectively by the entrepreneurial and moral energies of a burgeoning Pentecostal ‘movement’ than by politicians? Can the efforts of the politicians to create sustainable democratic politics and more effective enabling environments for business activity be bolstered by the ‘little platoons’ or enclaves of local civic religious and other activities encouraged by the Pentecostals?
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