

**“Six Decades as a Worldwide Religion Watcher:
Observations & Lessons Learned”**

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MICHAEL CROMARTIE: We’re delighted to have with us Professor Peter Berger. Many of you have read his work. You know his important books. *Invitation to Sociology* was written over 40 years ago, and it’s still in print. His book, *The Social Construction of Reality*, is a classic and it’s still in print. Now, his autobiography is out. It’s called *Adventures of an Accidental Sociologist: How to Explain the World without Becoming a Bore*.

So, Professor Berger, we’re looking forward to you talking to us about your journey.

DR. PETER BERGER: Well, thank you. Michael gave me a very difficult assignment to talk about various things I have learned in the course of my years as a sociologist of religion. [My lecture] is going to be all over the map.

But the first lesson I want to mention is not directly related to religion. In fact, it can relate to almost anything, and that is the possibility of being objective in scientific enterprise and specifically in scientific studies of human beings. I guess it’s relatively easy to be objective if you’re a natural scientist. You don’t usually have a strong personal commitment or passionate view about what you’re studying, but when we’re studying human behavior we are very often dealing with matters that concern us, and this is very much true in terms of religion.

My religious views have been pretty much the same throughout my career. I was and I am a moderate Lutheran, not a very good Lutheran, but a Lutheran. In some ways I’m still a Lutheran. So the problem is very simply can I study religion if I have myself religious commitments or, for that matter, I suppose, anti-religious commitments. An atheist probably may also have this problem.

And the way in which I’ve described the solution to this is, it is possible to wear two hats at different times. To use a more technical term, my teacher Alfred Schütz used to say—

he coined the concept of relevant structure—we have different relevant structures, and the structure of religious faith is different from the structure of the relevance of the scholarly study of religion.

And I don't think there's anything mysterious about this because we do it all the time in everyday life. I mean, take a very simple example. I'm engaged in some sort of transaction of a business or scholarly nature with somebody I very much dislike. I really would like to get rid of this person as fast as possible, but we have some business to transact. So what do I do? I bracket my dislike and go on with the business.

That is exactly what you do in trying to be objective as a scholar of human affairs, and let me tell you the most dramatic example in my experience, which is an event that has nothing to do with religion but illustrates the point very clearly. One of my most exciting assignments as a social scientist occurred in 1985 when I was asked to chair an international working group on the future of South Africa, and ever since then I've been very much involved with South Africa, a country of which I've gotten very fond and in which something very big and very good happened. So I wished them well, and I've made many good friends there.

In any case, we assembled a working group of about 20 people. They were mostly white South Africans. We had four non-white South Africans, and we had a number of foreign scholars from Europe and the United States, and my job was to get them on a common wavelength. Otherwise the study wouldn't have made sense.

What we did is we interviewed people across the political spectrum of South Africa from the Afrikaner right wing, the so-called “bitter enders.” From the right wing Afrikanerdom to the comrades in the townships and the black townships who were plotting the overthrow of the government, and in each case we tried to select an interviewer among the 20 people in the group who at least would be listened to. They're not necessarily sympathetic to the people they were interviewing.

We had a weekend in a hunting lodge in the Eastern Transvaal, and one thing I did was to try and get them clear about objectivity. Most of them were engaged—well, they were South Africans—in South African politics in one way or another, and I told them, “Look. Your views don't matter in your interview. Don't tell people what you think. That's not of

interest. Make sure you ask them what they think and report as honestly and as accurately as you can what they told you."

Well, there was one member of the group in the meantime that's become very prominent. Some of you may know her name, Helen Zille. She was then a young journalist who became suddenly famous because she discovered and published that Steve Biko, one of the leaders in the anti-Apartheid movement, was murdered while in police custody, and in the meantime she has become very well known. She became mayor of Cape Town and is now the leader of the Democratic Alliance, which is the major opposition party.

Well, at that time she was a Marxist and very much involved with anti-Apartheid activities. So when I talked about objectivity, she said, "Well, that's impossible. We can't be objective. We have to be part of the struggle, and actually we shouldn't be objective."

Her assignment was the bitter enders who knew who she was, but she is herself Afrikaner. She speaks, of course, Afrikaans, and Afrikaners have a very strong sense of what they call "the folk," and she belongs to the folk even though from their point of view, unfortunately, she was opposed to apartheid, but they talked to her, and they told her what they thought.

Well, she said it was impossible. You couldn't do this. She ended up writing one of the best reports in the study, and until you got to the last couple of pages of her paper, you would think she was one of them, although she violently disagreed with their views. She objectively reported what she was asked to study, and then the last couple of pages she talked about the struggle and so forth, and we simply could edit it out.

So objectivity is possible. It's possible in the highly inflamed political situation. It's possible in any situation that the person who studies the situation has strong feelings about, and it is certainly possible in religion. So I thought this is not a specific lesson I learned as a sociologist of religion, though also as a sociologist of religion I think it's true of the social sciences in general.

Now, let me come to some specifics. I will talk about four areas in which I have worked, which together took a very important part of my research agenda over the years, and each one, I think, is of pretty general interest.

Let me first take a matter where I very much changed my mind, and in fact, it's the major area where as a sociologist I changed my mind, and that is the question of the relationship of religion to modernity. When I started out my work in sociology of religion, almost everyone in the field believed in what generally was called secularization theory, which when you take apart some of the pretentious verbiage of sociologists really is a very simple thesis. It's a thesis that modernity leads to decline of religion. The more modernity, the less religion.

And almost everyone thought that at the time. Well, [it was] the '60s when I started writing things and doing things beyond being a student, and it was not completely crazy. There were some reasons for saying this. If I had more time, I would talk about where we were right, where we're wrong, but my first publications on religion were very much based on that assumption, which I didn't argue, which I assumed as being one of the common understandings of the field.

I changed my mind not because of any religious or philosophical changes on my own, but simply because I concluded that the evidence simply did not support this thesis. And I was not the only one. Almost everyone in the field came to the same conclusion, many of them about the same time, and there are reasons why this happened particularly very strongly in the '70s.

Contrary to that theory, to describe the modern world, the contemporary world as being highly secularized is a very difficult feat indeed. There are a couple of social scientists who hold onto that theory, which in a way I admire. I admire people who go against majority opinion. In fact, I somehow admire people whose views are maintained in the face of empirical evidence. There's something heroic about that kind of chutzpah.

But most people in the area would agree secularization theory has become untenable, and if we look, the empirical situation is not simple. It's complicated, and I will just talk about it very briefly. If you look at the contemporary world, to describe it as secular is impossible. The real situation is that most of the world is as religious as it ever was. You have enormous explosions of religion in the world. I would say the two major ones, one is very well known, the other one is still not quite as well known, and I will talk about it in a moment. One is the enormous upsurge of Islam, which nobody predicted, and has

become very well known partly for obvious reasons on the world scene, and the other is the meteoric rise of Pentecostalism, which I will talk about in a moment.

These are the two big explosions, one could call them, of religious passion in the world. There are some others. In fact, you can say every major religious tradition has been going through a period of resurgence in the last 30, 40 years or so. Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, you name it; anything but secularization.

Now, there are two exceptions to this generalization about the religiosity of the contemporary world. One is geographical, and the other is sociological. Geographically, the one important area of the world where you can really say secularization has gone on in a very massive way is Europe and some out-layers of Europe like Australia, Quebec, a very interesting case, but in terms of major areas in the world, Europe is very secularized compared to any other part of the world and very much so in comparison to the United States.

I won't say North America because already Canada, even English speaking Canada, is a little different, but the difference between the United States and Europe is very significant theoretically in terms of the demise of secularization theory because if modernity necessarily leads to the decline of religion, how do you explain the United States? You can say it's the exception to the rule, but it's a pretty big exception that really puts the theory into question, and it's very difficult to argue that say the Netherlands are more modern than the United States. It simply doesn't hold.

And yet there is a vibrant religious population in the United States of great significance socially, politically, any way you name it.

Now, I would say that in terms of the sociology of religion, Europe is the most interesting area because the exception is always what has to be explained. The United States is not exceptional at all. It's exceptional in some ways, some more attractive than others, but in terms of religion it's like most of the world.

Europe is different, and I wrote one book about this a few years ago together with two other sociologists. One was well known, a British sociologist, Grace Davie, who actually

wrote the book called *Europe—The Exceptional Case*, and another one, a young Greek sociologist, Effie Fokas, who was a sort of junior partner in this enterprise.

Europe is extremely interesting, and it's not a monolithic phenomenon. England is different from Germany. Germany is different from France. But Europe as a whole, including, by the way, central and eastern Europe, is indeed quite heavily secularized.

And one thing that Grace and I were trying to figure out is why is that, which got us really as much into history as into sociology. Let me quickly assuage your curiosity by saying there's not a single reason, and I would take it for granted that no important historical event has a single cause.

Grace and I came up with eight reasons, and I think when you put them all together, the whole phenomenon makes sense. It's no longer an impenetrable mystery. By far the most important reason, and Alexis de Tocqueville understood this more than 100 years ago, is the relationship of church and state. Everywhere in Europe Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, until very recently, until, say, the 19th century, which is recent in terms of the history of western civilization, church and state were very closely connected.

In fact, all of these churches came out of the history of being state churches, never in the United States, not even in colonial times. The Puritans tried it in Massachusetts. The Anglicans tried it in Virginia. It failed not because they were such tolerant people. Remember Puritans were hanging Quakers on Boston Common. They were intolerant, but there were too many others around. You simply couldn't establish a church, and then it went along with the enlightened views about freedom of religion. Thomas Jefferson convinced the legislature of Virginia to pass, I think, the first religious freedom act in the United States.

Okay. Modernity is not necessarily related to a decline in religion, though in certain cases it may be and particularly in Europe.

I have three more cases to talk about. The second lesson has to do precisely with this enormous phenomenon that I mentioned before, which is the explosion of Pentecostalism worldwide. I don't know how many of you are familiar with this. By now it's so big that very few people are totally unaware of it, but I'm always impressed by the sheer size of this phenomenon.

Now, it's difficult to measure for a number of reasons. One is that Pentecostalism, much of it, is not organized in denominations or congregations. It's, you know, storefront churches, people meeting in homes. Then it's difficult where you draw a line. It's a very fluid phenomenon. In fact, you have Pentecostal phenomena within organized churches, including the Roman Catholic Church.

And then a big, big question is China where we know that Pentecostalism has been exploding. Most of it is still illegal, difficult to quantify. In any case, leaving aside these difficulties, some people have made guesses, and a study by the Pew Center estimated 400 million Pentecostals in the world. More recently, the Center for the Study of World Christianity, which is located north of Boston at Gordon-Conwell Seminary, estimated 600 million.

Now, my hunch is the Pew estimate is probably more accurate and more reliable, credible than the other one, although they try very hard to be objective. Whichever figure you take, it's enormous, and I would say it must be the fastest growing religious movement in history.

Now, if you take the main characteristics of Pentecostalism beginning with the signature characteristic, which is speaking with tongues, so-called glossolalia, miraculous healing, other miracles, exorcism, demons, spirit possession, this whole package has always been around. Certainly in the history of Christianity that's where the name comes from, Pentecost, when not long after Jesus disappeared from earth you had his disciples gathering in Jerusalem and the Holy Spirit descended upon them and glossolalia occurred.

But modern Pentecostalism most historians date it from the early 20th century, and the event that many pick on, which was a fascinating event, was in 1904 or 1906. I now forget; anyway, one or the other date in Los Angeles when a one-eyed African American preacher came out of Texas, the name of William Seymour, and started preaching in an abandoned stable on Azusa Street. He must have been a very remarkable man. Within a few months he had an interracial congregation, very unusual in Los Angeles at that time, and all of these events took place. In any case, I read some newspaper accounts from a Los Angeles newspaper, which looked on this sort of with supercilious amusement, strange goings-on on Azusa Street. Well, if they looked at the world today, they would, I think, no longer be amused. Almost from the beginning they sent out missionaries from Azusa Street, first to

the United States, then abroad, and you had considerable growth of Pentecostalism between the two big wars.

The real explosion took place after World War II, and although there were quite a few Pentecostals in the United States, including Pentecostal denominations like the Assemblies of God, probably the biggest denomination which is Pentecostal, it hasn't grown phenomenally in the United States in recent decades. It has maintained itself. It hasn't, I think, grown as far as I know.

It has grown enormously in Africa, in parts of Asia, and most dramatically in Latin America. From Azusa Street to let's take the more modest figure, 400 million people worldwide, I can't think of any other religious movement that achieved comparable growth in that period of time.

Now, what's interesting is what does all of this mean, and the research center at Boston University which I started in 1985, one of our main interests has been studies of Pentecostalism, not because I have any personal inclination in that direction. I have never been possessed by any spirit, but it's enormously important, and we sponsored the early work of David Martin, another British sociologist who now has become sort of the dean of Pentecostal studies, and he started out in Latin America and then branched out to other parts of the world.

He noticed that Pentecostalism in many places creates a cultural revolution of tremendous social, economic and political significance, and I have witnessed some of it. I will tell you one story before I do the next point I wanted to make.

There are two quite different interpretations of the Pentecostal phenomenon, and to some extent perhaps they reflect the sympathies of the people who make the interpretation. One by David Martin sees Pentecostalism as a new incarnation of what Max Weber called the Protestant ethic. Pentecostalism or, at least let me put it more cautiously, people who live by the morality which Pentecostal preachers tried to advocate, have a lifestyle which is conducive to effective participation and mobility in a modern economy.

One of the sentences I wrote, I forget where, frankly, that keeps being quoted back to me which describes this, is Max Weber is alive and well and living in Guatemala. Guatemala has the highest percentage of Protestants in Latin America, probably now about one-third of the population, most of them Pentecostal, first generation Pentecostal.

That's one interpretation. The other, nothing as one single person, there are a couple of people I know and one is in Brazil; the other is in the Netherlands, both sociologists, who take a different view and who see Pentecostalism as a kind of cargo cult. Some of you may know this term. It's a religious movement in the early 20th century, developed in the South Pacific, where—mostly Melanesia, I think—the original inhabitants thought there was a prophet who preached this, that ships would arrive; later on it was airplanes, bringing all the good things of modernity, including refrigerators and typewriters and automobiles, and all you had to do was pray in accordance with this prophet's teachings, and these good things, the cargo, would come to you.

Let me say two things before I leave this topic, which I could talk to you about until midnight. One is those two interpretations, and my read on this is look, if we're talking about 400 million people, chances are both are represented. So some of them are new Protestants in the Weberian sense and others are new cargo cult people. It's almost necessary to assume that.

The more interesting ones are the Weberian ones because they create social change. The others don't. I happen to believe that the cargo will not come if they simply sit and pray. The cargo will come if they do what the Weberian type preachers tell them: work hard, educate your children, save, et cetera.

We now have a study going on middle class Protestants, Pentecostals, which we don't know very much about. Most of the study has been Pentecostalism among the poor, but precisely because of the Weberian effect, some of them are now middle class. In Guatemala one of them ran for president recently.

Before the middle class study, we did a study in South Africa. Researchers estimated that one in five South Africans now is Pentecostal, both black and white. A book came out, and we had a press conference about three years ago. We had a press conference in Johannesburg, which itself was very interesting, but afterwards we all went to a

Pentecostal mega church on the outskirts of Johannesburg, which was very, very interesting. Huge, they claim 30,000 members.

But I should add the congregation was about, visually, about 85 percent black, 15 percent white, white or colored, which is about the national proportions in South Africa, very mixed racially.

The preacher came on who is white and a former body builder, a kind of born again Schwarzenegger, and he preached in English. He had two messages. One was God does not intend you to be poor, and the second message was you can do something about it.

Well, when we left the church, there were about five or six of us connected with the research center we work with in South Africa, and none of them are Pentecostal. And we asked ourselves would we quarrel with the message of the sermon. No, we wouldn't quarrel with it.

And what's very interesting, the woman who runs this research center, her name is Anne Bernstein, who is a very secular Jew, has no religious inclinations at all as far as I can tell, as far as I know, but she's so impressed with the Pentecostals she's been going all over the country saying, "Look. This is social capital. We have to take this very seriously. This is a positive factor for the development of South Africa." Very, very interesting indeed.

So if you're interested in religion and you want to look at the big thing, look at Pentecostalism. It will keep you busy for a long time.

Now, two more. Two other, I think, important lessons. One has to do not so much with religion and modernization but religion and economic development. And when we started the institute at Boston University, it's now called the Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs, which has something to do with who gave money to it. We originally called it the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture, and that's what we meant, the relationship of economic development and religion.

I always have the feeling that on the ceiling hovering over this place is a very serious German with a big beard, namely, Max Weber, and the Weberian thesis on the relationship of Protestantism and modern economic development, particularly capitalist development, is I think a thesis which has to be tested again and again.

But you can take the Protestant ethic apart into its components, and then it applies to areas outside Protestantism. What are the components? Austerity, saving, hard work, rationality, education, all of these are a bundle, a behavioral bundle, and it was legitimated by Protestantism and still is in important segments of the Pentecostal movement.

But there are analogies elsewhere, and two that we looked at, and we chose them deliberately because these religious traditions are usually portrayed as being the opposite of the Protestant ethic: Roman Catholicism and Islam.

We had a study of Opus Dei in Spain, which is a fascinating case. Some of you I’m sure know about Opus Dei. It originated in the late ’20s, I think, very conservative Catholicism. Initially, though they now try to downplay this, they were very sympathetic to the Franco movement and the early years of the Franco regime.

But they were also convinced—this must have been after World War II, after the regime had been in place for quite some years, that if Spain was to become a prosperous country, it has to develop a market economy, and Opus Dei was very influential in shifting economic policy in Spain toward market processes. In fact, they ran the first business school in Spain. Now they have two. I don’t know which came first, one in Pamplona and one in Barcelona.

What I found interesting about Opus Dei is that you could combine—and this is true to today—a very conservative Catholic position with a very market oriented, modern approach to economic matters.

What they didn’t figure on, and this is another Weberian principle, the principle of unintended consequences. They wanted Spain to have a market economy. They also wanted Spain to be Catholic. They put it, “integrally Catholic.” What they didn’t particularly want was democracy. What they got was Spain today, which is very economically successful until the recent crisis, which is democratic, and certainly no longer integrally Catholic, and so the law of unintended consequences works very well.

Spain today is one of the most secular countries in Europe by any measurement, very interesting, including demography.

Before I leave this economic issue I must add one other thing. After many years of thinking about this and looking at research, I would emphasize a couple things about what I call the Weberian effect, the Protestant ethic effect. One is it has to have an expiration date attached to it. In other words, I think this kind of ethic, austere, self-denying, hard working, et cetera, is crucial, I would even say essential, in an early period of modern economic development. They may no longer be functional in an advanced modern economy where, yes, some people have to work hard and deny themselves and die on behalf of the company or whatever, but not everyone has to work that way, and a society that can afford me doesn't have to operate with the Protestant ethic.

Japan is a very interesting case. In fact, Japan is crucial to any theory of modernity because it was the first non-Western society that successfully modernized in an amazingly short period following the major restoration.

Well, when Japan first modernized the economy, what they did was fascinating. Essentially they democratized. They were not a democracy, but they "democratized" the Samurai ethic, and from the loyalty of feudal subjects to their lords, they developed loyalty to the company, and you had all of these characteristics of lifetime employment and spending all your time with your fellow workers and employees and so forth, very functional.

A number of Japanese social scientists have said it's no longer functional. In fact, it's dysfunctional, and for the kind of knowledge based economy that Japan has become, you need a much more individualistic, less communal kind of ethos, expiration date.

The other is latency. There are some religiously legitimated behavior patterns that lie dormant for a long period, and then when suddenly you have conditions change, a different aspect of them comes out, and that's very much the case with the so-called Confucian ethic, neo-Confucian ethics or post Confucian some have called it.

Max Weber actually did a very interesting study of Confucianism, and he argued that Confucianism, unlike Protestantism, was not congenial for modern economic development. In the 1970s there was a whole school of thought, especially in Asia, who said, no, Confucianism is one of the explanations of why East Asian societies have done so well.

Well, again, I would say both are right. The old Confucianism in Imperial China, I think Weber was quite right. The Confucian scholar despised anything that had to do with economics. Merchants could become rich, but they were basically despised. A true gentleman who became a bureaucrat in the Imperial bureaucracy, well, could pass the examinations mostly about ancient texts and could engage in such engineering activities as painting dragons on red silk, but, no, economic activity is below his dignity.

But what happened when you had Chinese emigrate to other countries, removed from the Imperial system, removed from the extended family. You had a very different situation, and in Indonesia where a small percentage of the population is Chinese, having an enormous impact on the economy; the same in the Philippines, in Malaysia—Malaysia has a bigger percentage—and other places.

Suddenly some of the Confucian virtues were activated in a way they could not be in China itself, and now since the economic reforms in China, it seems to me this has become much more general in China itself. The context, the environment, social and political environment for economic activity has changed, and suddenly these latent virtues of Confucian ethic have come to the fore.

My most recent research project, which we only started a few weeks ago, is called “Secularism and its Adversaries,” and that’s what happens when secular elites have to confront religiously motivated voters.

The case we start out with is Russia. We have a very good Russian sociologist involved, where you had the most, in the communist world, the most thorough attempt to eradicate religion in the long run if not immediately.

But then we compare four countries, and you may be surprised at the list. We compare Turkey, Israel, India and the United States. I will come to the United States in a moment. The other three countries all have something very important in common. The modern state was founded by very secular elites.

In Turkey, Kemal Ataturk, I don’t know if he hated religion in general, I think he hated Islam, and the republic was set up as a very strongly secular state, and in fact, Kemalism as an ideology is a very secularist ideology.

Well, for most of its history, the Turkish republic was a very authoritarian regime, and the regime created an elite military, bureaucratic and quite a bit academic, which was I think it's fair to say militantly secularist. Turkey democratized in recent years, and by now I think probably could be called a full-fledged democracy, and all of these religious types where the Kemalists thought they were back there in Anatolia and were politically irrelevant, suddenly these people voted, and not surprisingly, they voted their values and now we have an Islamist in control of the government. The Kemalist elite is still there. It hasn't completely given up, especially the military, but very interesting, secularist elite, religious by population.

Israel, very much the same, though a little different process. The elite that set up the State of Israel in 1948 was very secular indeed. They were mostly from Europe, Eastern Europe, socialists, some Marxists. Ben Gurion, I don't think he ever attended a synagogue other than for somebody else's child's bar mitzvah or something. They wanted a Jewish state, but they meant an ethnically Jewish state. They didn't mean Judaism.

Well, the Jewish population of Israel changed. Two things happened. One is that you had massive immigration from the Middle East, mostly Jews, most of whom were very religious, and then you had the differential fertility of the Orthodox. The average couple in Tel Aviv has minus two children. The average Orthodox family in Jerusalem has an average of eight. I'm exaggerating slightly, but not too much. So this religious population keeps growing, and they vote and have become a crucial factor in Israeli politics to the dismay of the infertile intellectual couple in Tel Aviv.

Now, India is a little different because the regime was—I mean independent India, since 1947—was never anti-religious, and in fact, Gandhi, a kind of religious saint, was an icon of the independence movement, but the people who actually fashioned the state, people around Nehru, were not religious at all, and they didn't want a Hindu state. In fact the constitution of India says India is a secular republic, and what that meant is not what Kemal Ataturk meant. It meant it was not Hindu the way Pakistan defined itself as an Islamic state.

Well, many of the institutions that this elite created are still in force and you have many people in India who are secularists. About 85 percent of the population of India is Hindu,

and it's not surprising that many of them were very observant Hindus who vote their values.

So you have one party at the moment that's not in power, the BJP, who has a very significant constituency of people who want what they call Hindutva, which is a state inspired by Hindu values.

And the United States is different, and I find it very interesting to compare them with the other three. Now, the United States does not have a political elite which is secularist. Washington is full of people who go from one prayer meeting to another, who say grace in restaurants to the embarrassment of people at other tables. It's not a secular elite, but what the United States does have is a cultural elite, which is very secularist. I guess the Harvard Faculty Club would be an iconic description of this class, and you also have similar conflicts between what is a very religious country in terms of numbers of people who are religious by any reasonable criteria, and this culture of elite. And many of the struggles between these two factions of the polity are very important in American politics until today.

Sweden is probably the most secular country in the world. Very few Swedes believe in God or Jesus or anything, and the most religious country in the world by many measures is India. You take four steps in India and you fall over five gods. Well, I described the United States as a country of Indians with a Swedish cultural elite, and many of the problems of America have to do with the fact that the Indians have become increasingly pissed off at the Swedes.

Let me just say if any of you ask me about prognosis, I'll be very hard put though I could try. It depends on what part of the world you're looking at.

As far as the United States is concerned I don't see anything short of a catastrophic development of some sort that would greatly change the situation either among the Swedes or among the Indians, but I may be wrong, and I think it was Herman Kahn, the Father of Futurology, who coined that wonderfully absurd phrase "surprise free future." Well, unfortunately or fortunately in some cases the future is not surprise free, and there are some basically unpleasant surprises I can think of where the situation would change dramatically basically in favor of the Indians.

But assuming a more or less uncatastrophic development, I don't see any big changes on the horizon.

SALLY QUINN, *The Washington Post*: I'm curious about the educational level of those who are among the new adherents of this religion, but that it is so backward in terms of the demons and spirits and, you know, all that kind of thing and speaking in tongues, and yet you say that it's a force for economic growth. So how do you square? It seems to me that those would be totally conflicting behaviors.

PETER BERGER: Well, all I can say is empirically they are not, and first of all, one should not assume that most people are philosophers and have a coherent, logical world view. Most of us combine logically irreconcilable elements of a world view within our own minds.

But there's nothing that necessarily interferes with rational economic activity that you also believe that some people are possessed by demons and the demons can be exorcized. That's a different compartment of your life, to use a term I used at the beginning of my talk. It's a different relevance structure.

I said that I would say that Evangelicalism in general is the most modern religious movement in the world. Why? Because it is the only—and the Pentecostals do represent a subdivision of Evangelicals—it's the only major religious movement in which an active individual decision is at the center of the faith. You cannot be born a Christian. You have to be born again to be a Christian. That's a matter of individual decision. There's nothing more modern than that, and that's very much present in Pentecostalism.

Now, that they also believe in demons is another story, and you used the word "backward." I'm not so sure.

Let me say again, the big explosion has been in developing societies, Latin America, Africa, Asia, mostly among very poor people. Now, which is happening, if they start engaging in small scale enterprise, it's very unlikely, almost impossible, that any of these enterprises will end up as a big corporation.

But what happens to their children? And if you want an American analogy it's the Chinese laundry. Chinese immigrants came to America mostly very poor, uneducated. They managed to get into laundry because you didn't need language for that. What happens to their children? Well, many of them became professionals, and already the second generation, the third generation Chinese Americans are among the most successful ethnic groups in the United States in terms of social mobility, economic status.

So it's not that the Pentecostal woman, and very often entrepreneurs are women, starts a beauty salon in Johannesburg. What happens with her children? And we already know a little bit about that.

SALLY QUINN: Is this like the new prosperity gospel that you see in a lot of Evangelical churches?

PETER BERGER: The new prosperity gospel has often been misinterpreted in terms of the cargo cult idea: give money to the preacher, pray, and God will make you rich. That's, I agree with the critics, unlikely to happen, if I may put it cautiously. But what will happen? That's what we talked about when we left that church in Johannesburg, if people lived by the virtues that the preacher was talking about, they may not become rich, but they'll certainly be much less poor. So there is an aspect of the prosperity gospel which is empirically correct, and that's usually forgotten in the criticisms.

DR. ARD LOUIS, University of Oxford: You said Pentecostalism leads to revolution, but I wonder if you can unpack that a little bit. You mentioned Guatemala, which famously had some Latin Marx Pentecostal presidents who didn't actually do that much revolution in the end. I'm just curious what you mean when you say Pentecostalism leads to revolution because it doesn't always do so.

PETER BERGER: Well, first of all, I wasn't talking about a political revolution. I was talking about a social revolution. The revolution can already be seen on a micro level, and David Martin has produced very good descriptions of this. I would say especially Latin America. It's for some extent true in Africa.

Pentecostalism is a women's movement. Now, most of the preachers are men because they take a very literal approach to the Bible and the Apostle Paul wrote somewhere

women are supposed to keep quiet in church, but the missionaries and the educators, the organizers are mostly women, and they're remarkable.

And Pentecostalism in Latin America is an anti-machismo movement because—well, the way Martin put it, the women domesticate their men from the street to the kitchen, and they have to stop drinking every weekend. They have to stop having what in Mexico is called a “casa chica” where you keep your mistress. They have to work hard and save and educate the children.

If they do this, they become good little Protestants. They stay, but the family dynamic changes dramatically, and if they don't, the women usually throw them out and either stay alone—and some of them are quite formidable—or they get themselves new husbands who are Pentecostal. So it's a little complicated, but I think the basic trend is pretty clear.

ANDREW FERGUSON, *The Weekly Standard*: I had a question about the expiration date that you talked about, the behavioral bundle of virtues or qualities or traits. It's an old idea that capitalism can undermine itself by undermining the virtues that make capitalism possible. Can we really say that capitalism can continue to succeed or a free market if these virtues do expire, if they're not general?

PETER BERGER: Well, the idea that capitalism digs its own grave, Marx had the idea, but he was wrong about the dynamics. I think the more plausible way, it was Schumpeter who said that. I'm not convinced of that at all. I would say capitalism can survive if a significant—let's use the word “vanguard”—continues to practice the Protestant ethic: work hard, have stable family life so you're not distracted too much, educate your children, all of that. It doesn't have to be the entire population, and as a society becomes more affluent, there can be many freeloaders. If nobody worked hard, if people only did things that they enjoyed, no, I think the economy would fall apart, but it doesn't take everybody. But if you have a whole population moving up, again, it doesn't have to be everybody. You can have the cargo cult people who don't work and don't do this and don't do that, but a significant group has to be Protestant, in quotation marks.

MR. FOER: I was interested whether you think that your findings about religion and modernity more broadly supply you with a thesis that could supply you with the ready-made answer for your last question about the tension between these secular elites and the religious masses. Whether or not that conflict will ultimately get resolved in places where there’s already this healthy existing relationship between religion and modernity, and maybe the places where that won’t happen are the places where you have systems where those things are just irreconcilable.

PETER BERGER: I mean, where we were wrong with secularization theory, we thought that modernity necessarily secularizes. That’s not the case. The United States proves that pretty much. What modernity necessarily does, it pluralizes. Why does it do that? Because all of the processes of modernity, urbanization, mass communication, education, what have you, migration very important; it throws together people where they have to rub elbows with others who have very different codes of behavior, belief systems, et cetera.

The question is: how do you manage pluralism? And I would say the United States has been remarkably successful in managing pluralism, and the Europeans are groping toward it. It becomes an existential question in Europe at this point. I mean, existential, either indigenous European women will have more children which is an unlikely project, I think, or they will have more and more immigrants. Most of them, many of them will come from the Muslim world.

So the integration of Muslims in Europe is an existential question for Europe. It’s not for the United States, and it has to do with the management of pluralism. And while in America it’s very natural for somebody to say—well, now it’s become quite natural—“I’m a Hindu American.”

To say, “I’m a Hindu Norwegian,” is a little bit more difficult, and they will have to solve that problem not necessarily by imitating the United States. It may take some different forms, but they have to find the problem of answering the question how can you be a Hindu Norwegian.

DOYLE McMANUS, *Los Angeles Times*: You briefly mentioned the study on the Protestant ethic in Muslim Indonesia, and I’d like you to expand on that a little bit. The obvious larger

question is: what have you learned about the compatibility or incompatibility of Islam with economic development, market capitalism, and democracy?

PETER BERGER: The two most important cases for this are Turkey and Indonesia. There are two big Islamic lay organizations in Indonesia. There's Nahdlatul Ulama, which is a misnomer. It means, association of religion teachers. We did a study of Nahdlatul Ulama. The head of this movement who died, about a year ago, is Abdurrahman Wahid. He's not a secularized scholar, secularized Muslim. But he believes in democracy and very much in the market economy. He was for a while president of Indonesia.

We were a group—somebody asked him about usury. Muslim law prohibits usury. What about dividends, bank accounts or investments? He said, "Oh, that's not an issue." He said what the prophet talked about was inordinate interest, but ordinary interest is perfectly all right, and in any case that was an interesting sentence, the Koran is not the textbook of modern economics.

Then I asked him about apostasy. I said, "You believe in religious freedom?" Muslims always quote something in the Koran which supports that there should be no coercion in matters of religion. There are other passages which are a little less user friendly, but I said, "Okay. You believe in religious freedom. What about a Muslim who changes religion which is punished by death in the Sharia?"

He said, "Oh, if that happened, I would try to dissuade him and he'd be making a big mistake, but it's his right and the state should not interfere." That's a very different kind of Islam from fundamentalism, and I would say maybe not this particular degree of Abdurrahman Wahid, but this is an Islam which is still dominant in Indonesia. Now, there are other voices that are less tolerant, but it's still there.

And in Turkey, of course, we are seeing this experiment, the Islamic party in charge of a secular democratic state. So far it doesn't look too bad, though there are some alarming developments. Actually they are not alarming in terms of Islam. They're alarming in terms of Turkish foreign policy and some authoritarian habits at home.

KIRSTEN POWERS, FOX News: Do you have a sense that [Pentecostalism] is growing in the United States? Because I feel like I've seen a little bit of that within the Evangelical community embracing that more.

PETER BERGER: I don't think so. Maybe some, some charismatic expression, even in the Catholic Church, but Pentecostal, it's in the denominations as far as I know are not particularly growing like Assemblies of God. It is outside the United States that it has exploded.

MICHAEL GERSON, *The Washington Post*: Can I ask you to comment just on these two models in Asia of social progress, of Confucianism and Christianity and how they kind of relate to one another?

PETER BERGER: First of all, I had said something about the Confucian term is not completely accurate. It's not Confucianism the way they Weber studied it, the great texts, Analects of Confucius. It's a much more folk religion type of Confucianism, very pragmatic.

And in a way one could say East Asia didn't need Protestantism. It already had the Protestant ethic. So the value added—same in Korea—the value added part of Protestantism is not in providing an ethic of economic modernity. It's other things, such as, well, the personal meaning of Christianity, of prayer and salvation and also a very important, I think, individualism, especially Protestantism as an individuating religion.

And in China, as I said very briefly earlier this afternoon, it's very difficult to know just what is happening in China numerically. The government tells us there are about 130 million Christians in China. I think that's a gross underestimate, probably wishful thinking on the government's part, but much of it is invisible. It's illegal.

But from the evidence I have seen, I have a colleague who specializes in religion in China, and he thinks that Christianity is attractive, particularly now, among middle class Chinese, including party members, because it has the aura of modernity and they will be modern people, and to be Christian is sort of to be modern, which is not altogether wrong.

PAUL EDWARDS, *Deseret News*: I understand the thesis about the way Pentecostalism results in a kind of domesticated lifestyle in places where they may not have been that. The control of Machismo, for example, the way you talked about. But it strikes me that it's almost inherently charismatic as a movement, and so are there any specific

institutions that are helping to routinize what we see with Pentecostalism, especially in Latin America?

PETER BERGER: I mean, there are already big denominations. In Brazil you have this huge denomination, fully Pentecostal with a wonderful title, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, which has millions of adherents, runs their own television system, have quite a few members of the national parliament now, the national congress, and are sending missionaries to the United States for Portuguese-speaking people here, which has a big community in Boston, and they're sending a lot of missionaries to Portuguese-speaking Africa. So that's institutionalization with a vengeance, and there also continues to be this much more free—they're still charismatic, but very institutional, and then you also get the more free-flowing things which, again, are very hard to quantify.

PAUL EDWARDS: And do they tend to be then national in origin?

PETER BERGER: There's also the national element. I mean, one thing in Russia which is very strong are American missionaries. They're trying to steal orthodox souls and that kind of thing. But Pentecostalism I would say all over the world originated from American missionaries, but they've become quite irrelevant. I mean, Brazilians are sending missionaries here. They're not waiting for American Pentecostals to go there.

So Pentecostalism in much of the developing world has become very indigenized and creates their own institutions. Now, they also are very conscious of the fact that they are part of the worldwide community, and they have good relations with American Pentecostals and go back and forth, missionaries' translating of books, et cetera, but missionaries are no longer crucial.

Very important, I mentioned Korea. Korean missionaries are all over China now. They go in on a business visa with a suitcase full of books and Bibles and missionize in China until they're discovered and thrown out.

Also Martin studied this, and what's also very interesting is in Latin America Pentecostalism has been quite successful among non-Spanish, non-Portuguese speaking people, indigenous people like Mayas, for example, very successful in Guatemala and

southern Mexico, Quechuas in Peru. I mean very curious situation. You get American revival hymns translated into Mayan. I mean that's great.

TIMOTHY DALRYMPLE, Patheos.com: I've had some concern that the Protestant ethic, work ethic, in the United States and maybe some other places may have disintegrated to a point that it's really accelerating economic challenges and economic decline, and yet you are pointing out the possibility that you can reach a point where not everybody has to live according to the Protestant work ethic, and you can have Peter Bergers. I'm just wondering can you get to a point where you don't have enough Henry Fords to support all the Peter Bergers.

Number two, I've seen some data that one of the few sections of American Evangelicalism that's really growing is amongst immigrant populations, and so if you have any thoughts on why Asian American immigrant communities, in particular, have gravitated to Christianity.

PETER BERGER: I have no data on this. We haven't studied it. I think the basic reason why Chinese Americans have succeeded or why Chinese immigrants have succeeded in America is the same reason why they've succeeded in Manila or in Jakarta. It's this latent Confucian ethic which suddenly performs a different function under new conditions.

And the invasion of academia, for example, with Asians is very similar to what happened with Jews in the '30s where a tradition of intellectuality which originated in making sophisticated distinctions between Talmudic texts then becomes transferred into profane activities, and you have this explosion of intellectualism among American Jews who then invaded the citadels of academic power. It's very similar, it seems to me what's happening with Asian immigrants.

TIMOTHY DALRYMPLE: Then the first question was on the disintegration of the Protestant ethic and whether that ultimately becomes detrimental.

PETER BERGER: I think that theoretically I would have to say yes. I mean, to put it very simply, if no one worked hard anymore, you know, something would give, but I don't know how you would decide just when that point is reached.

I mean, everything in America functions much better than in many other countries despite the fact that there are lots of non-Protestant ethic people abroad, not abroad, yeah, around.

PETER DAVID, *The Economist*: You said that you abandoned the secularization thesis because it turned out to be wrong just for empirical reasons, but have you developed a theory of why it turned out to be wrong? Do you have a sort of psychological reductionist view of why man needs God?

What theory can you give us about the growth, the continuing health and growth of religion in the modern world?

PETER BERGER: Am I speaking as a sociologist or am I speaking as a religious believer, which I am? In the latter capacity, I would say that I think religion expresses an important truth about the world, and the truth eventually reasserts itself. I can't say this as a social scientist. God cannot be studied by the methods of empirical science, but as a social scientist, I think one can say you can develop a theory. I haven't done it, but you can do it. Other people have done it, that there is a very basic human need for a comprehensive view of things which includes guidance and consolation about the vicissitudes of human life, and religion provides that almost uniquely.

So I think even from a purely empirical point of view, an atheist observer would conclude it's unlikely that this will disappear.

ALLISON POND, *Deseret News*: Do you have different world views, different religions, different ways of making sense of the world, bumping up against each other a lot more frequently and colliding? And how does religion adapt? How does religion change because of that? What does religion do in the face of globalization to remain relevant, to remain vibrant, maybe in some sense asking you to tell the future, but also looking at what's happened and what's going on now?

PETER BERGER: What does globalization mean on the cultural level? It means that everybody talks to everybody else or at least can do so, and that has a very important effect and has to do, again, with why secularization theory was wrong. This globalizing

conversation, which is not just people literally talking to each other but different views of the world being ongoingly communicated to people, it doesn't mean that people stop being religious, but it means that religion along with almost everything else loses its taken for granted status. It's no longer self-evident. It requires some sort of decision—it can be a very unsophisticated level.

So that's a very dramatic change, and through most of history most human beings lived in communities that were religiously and morally homogeneous. They may know that there were people who believed other things. Some may visit occasionally, but their significant life was in a homogeneous religious world.

That has become very unusual. Now, there may be some, for example, Indian villages where things haven't changed that much, but in most of India they have changed even on the village level.

Now, that's very important and has to do with individuation, which is why I said that Evangelicalism is the most individual, the most modern religion in the world. You have to make an individual decision. You have to decide what you believe in.

That can actually mean an intensification of religious belief because it's your decision now. It's not just because you happen to be born in a particular place. That's how I would see globalization.

Now, there are two extreme reactions to this process. One is fundamentalism, which is to reassert the certainty of a particular tradition as if it could still be taken for granted, and I say "as if" because it doesn't, and the other one is relativism where you just embrace all this multiplicity. There is no truth at all. You have no convictions left of any sort. Anything goes. Morally the only virtue is tolerance. You tolerate everything and everybody.

Well, in between is where most people are. They are not fundamentalistic. They no longer take for granted what their grandparents believe. They're also not relativists. They have certain views, certain moral views of what is unacceptable.

That's a messy situation, but I think it's a very creative one, and if freedom is a value, which it certainly is for me, that's another way of saying that people have become more free.

And I've said to theological audiences who bemoan this modern world where Christianity is a commodity and people choose, "Well, why do you bemoan this? That was the situation in which Christianity originated in the late Roman Empire." When Paul went to Athens, he faced a highly pluralistic world, and Christianity came into that mix. Why should you regret the situation which was a situation of the early church? Christianity couldn't be taken for granted because it just appeared on the scene.

So I think this is not a bad thing at all. I said earlier and didn't elaborate on it in every major tradition you can see enormous upsurges of religious commitment and religious passion. Some take ugly forms, fundamentalists violently intolerant, but most don't. It just means that people make a recommitment to the tradition out of which they came.

ALLISON POND: Do we have a global civil religion or do you see us moving towards creating something like that?

PETER BERGER: The short answer is no, but you have certain things that could be called that. A French sociologist has talked about the humanicity of human rights, which has organizations. I mean Amnesty International or whatever, where you have certain spreading, a kind of civil religion which takes different forms in the Muslim world, in India, in China, but there's a kind of civil religion, which will reflect what human beings have a right to expect of their governments, not necessarily democracy, but certain things like, well, freedom of religion being one of them, freedom to choose your spouse, freedom to choose your occupation. So no, but yes, okay?

ARD LOUIS: Why the rightward economic swing among American Evangelicals, which was more right wing or conservative economic positions. Why wasn't there a big move towards something like social justice, some kind of communitarian view?

PETER BERGER: A friend of mine once called me a "God-er." He said, "Once a God-er always a God-er." The fact that the Nones, the religiously secular uncommitted have

become an important constituent in the Democratic Party while the God-ers have become an important constituent in the Republican Party, across religious lines incidentally, which is interesting. I mean the more conservative Jews, Catholics, whoever, tend to vote Republican.

I think that's accidental. It could have happened the other way around. There's nothing intrinsic about the Republican Party which makes it religious. But once it happened, for whatever reason, it gets stuck, and then you have a constituency which has to be taken into account.

Now, the Democrats have been trying to revive this, but Hillary Clinton already made some attempts to seem pious, which is very odd for a Wellesley graduate to do. I don't think it was terribly credible. Now, this may change. I mean, there is a left wing Evangelical movement.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: But it's very small.

ARD LOUIS: So basically you're saying it's a bit like an accident. Once it starts moving everybody just sort of shifts in that direction. Because it's actually interesting that in the Mormon Church there seemed to be a plurality on the views earlier, and it has gone to something monolithic. I'm presuming the same is probably true of the Evangelicals. There was much more a plurality of views 30 years ago, whereas now it seems like it is much more monolithic, and the question is why this shift to the monolithic.

PETER BERGER: I'm not a historian, but one thing that happened, maybe in the '30s; certainly by the '50s you had a Europeanization of the American intelligentsia which probably has to do with social mobility, with lots of people entering the middle class from non-middle class backgrounds, and the American cultural elite, the Swedes as I call them, is quite secular, and many of them have now found a political home in the Democratic Party, and the Democratic Party is obligated to take them into account for obvious reasons.

Just why this happened and when it happened I'm not absolutely sure, but Europeans feel very comfortable, especially European intellectuals, in the American academic milieu.

SALLY QUINN: Do you think that religion is good for modernity, good for capitalism, good for economies no matter what country we're talking about?

Is the sort of explosion of religion in so many of these countries a good thing or a bad thing in terms of what's going to happen with the economy?

I look at Europe which is secular. Is the secularization of Europe going to hurt them economically? We were talking about how Pentecostalism in so many of these countries like Asia and South America is really going to help them economically. And China, we see what's happening in China. So is any of that religion that's happening there affecting their economy and could that possibly be a reason why their economy is surging the way it is?

PETER BERGER: There are two words which have to be clarified. One is religion and the other is good. I would say a Protestant, which as I've indicated doesn't have to be Protestant but could be Muslim, could be Catholic, but a religion which incorporates the virtues that Weber called the Protestant ethic; so you have to say which religion. This kind of religion is good for modern economic development, especially in its early stages. It may not be good for modern economic development at the later stage.

So you have to say which religion. Certainly Islamic fundamentalism is not good for development, among other reasons, for the role it assigns to women, and if half the population is kept out of any kind of civic or economic role, that's not good for development.

Another question is, is religion good for democracy? Again you have to ask what kind of religion. What has been happening in Russia at least since the Putin crowd got in is that the Orthodox Church has been a legitimate, increasingly authoritarian regime, bad for democracy.

So you have to ask which religion and good for what. I don't think that the secularism of Europe has much to do with economics. Western Europe has reached a stage of economic development where I don't think it really needs the Protestant ethic.

SALLY QUINN: But we're certainly as economically developed as Europe, and yet, you know, we are a very, very religious country. Is that a good thing given the sort of cultural

nature of our country? Is the fact that we are so religious a good thing for us economically at this stage?

PETER BERGER: I would think that it's irrelevant economically.

FRED BARNES, *The Weekly Standard*: You talked about Europe and aside from this vicarious religion, why has there been no upsurge in religious commitment in Europe? And is there a chance of that happening in Europe?

PETER BERGER: Most of my predictions have turned out to be wrong, but what happened is, I think, the kind of thing that Grace Davie and I were talking about. You had the process of secularization in Europe, which by now is very established. It's part of what I would call the European package. It has become part of European culture. It's called the Akey, and they have to sign onto 1,000 pages of European Union law [to join the EU], but part of that Akey is cultural, not in the formal, legal sense, but you buy into it. And I think every country that becomes part of Europe, the new Europe culturally buys into the secular package. Ireland is a very good example of it. Spain is. Poland I think is beginning to be.

So given that, it's not surprising that there are no great religious upsurges in Europe at this point. The Muslim case is very interesting because, again, we have data on this. Most Muslims in Europe want to adjust to the European situation. They don't want to be in a separate subculture, but a significant part does, and I would say there is a silent contract in Europe, especially Western Europe, between government and religion.

You have religious freedom, which is very real. You can worship anything you like as long as you don't, you know, do something criminal. You can propagate your beliefs, but you have to keep them out of the public political arena, okay, which has become very commonly accepted throughout Europe, with slight differences.

A wonderful case, when Tony Blair was president or prime minister, somebody asked a staff member, "Mr. Blair is very religious. Why does he never talk about it?" and this guy replied, "We don't do God here."

Now, a significant number of Muslims challenged that silent contract. They want their religion to be part of the public sphere, and when they are citizens of these countries, which an increasing number of them are, they want to have somehow their values recognized by the political system. That's a crisis as yet unresolved.

CARL CANNON, RealClearPolitics.com: Is there any precedent for where Islam becomes strong at a place it wasn't for then Christians to rediscover their roots maybe for nationalistic reasons or racial reasons even or not reasons we would even approve of, but a counter force?

PETER BERGER: Well, that's what Pope Benedict hopes when he talks about Evangelization of Europe. Islam has forced people in Europe, all kinds of people, to reconsider where they come from, and you had it in the debate a few years ago. Remember the constitution of Europe? Various drafts of the constitution of the European Union and should Christianity be mentioned, and the Poles, at that time still relatively Catholic, wanted it, and the French opposed. I don't know what happened in the end, but that was very interesting. I mean, obviously Christian civilization in Europe has a history. Is it still a Christian civilization?

What you're asking is could the Islamic challenge force people to rethink their Christian roots? It's possible. It's possible. It's not necessary, and I think something else will have to happen like massive unemployment going on over a long period of time.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Thank you, Peter. Everybody was riveted, and we are very grateful for this wonderful overview you've given us.

♦ END ♦

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