Weberian Sociology and the Study of Pentecostalism: Historical Patterns and Prospects for the Future

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Abstract

This paper presents three sociological theories of Weberian origin: church-sect theory, secularization theory and what I have called the Pentecostal ethic for development. These theories are discussed with respect to the study of Pentecostalism, as it will be demonstrated that Pentecostalism has played a unique role in shaping the trajectory of Weberian sociology, and likewise the way scholars approach Pentecostalism today. By analyzing the three aforementioned Weberian theories and their interactions with the Pentecostal movement a pattern emerges in which Weber's works are crafted into theories that depart significantly from his intentions and gain widespread acceptance, only to be stymied by research on Pentecostals and subsequently fall from favor among scholars. Recognizing this pattern provokes questions about the future of Weberian sociology as well as inquiry into Pentecostalism.

Introduction

The Pentecostal movement is often traced back to the Azusa Street Revival (though many have noted Pentecostal expressions before this event) of 1906, one year after Max Weber published his second volume of *Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (1904-05). Max Weber has become known as

one of the fathers of modern sociology of religion, and Pentecostalism is frequently referred to as the fastest growing Christian movement in the world. In this history Weberian sociology has crossed paths with Pentecostalism in a few instances, each time producing interesting and trajectory-altering results.

Church-sect theory became untenable, in part, due to studies that featured Pentecostals. Secularization theory fell into disrepute, in part, because of the rapid growth of Pentecostalism in the latter half of the twentieth century, including the Charismatic Revival of the 1960s and 1970s. The Pentecostal ethic for development has recently emerged in the sociology of religion, and has gained a considerable following among respected social theorists and theologians. The Pentecostal ethic for development, specifically claims that Pentecostals are imbued with Max Weber's ethic of inner-worldly asceticism and therefore offer a solution to contemporary economic problems in the developing world, is a relatively new proposal in the sociology of religion, but has yet to be substantiated with corroborating data. Each of these three theories have roots in the work of Max Weber, though over time they acquired significant departures from the work and intentions of Weber.

By analyzing these three cases and their interactions with Pentecostalism, a pattern emerges. Some elements of this pattern will be visible in all three cases, while others may only be visible in the cases of church-sect and secularization theories. This is due to the recent emergence of a Pentecostal ethic for development, and it is suggested that this recent hypothesis is on a similar trajectory and therefore may suffer a similar fate as church-sect and secularization theories. The commonalities shared by these three cases that make this pattern visible can be seen on three distinct planes: origin, application and acceptance.

Origin

Church-Sect Theory

Church-sect theory, secularization theory, and the Pentecostal ethic for development all have roots in the works of Max Weber. However, the relationship between each of these theories and the work of Max Weber is not a straightforward one. For this reason we should more rightly refer to them as quasi-Weberian. Church-sect theory developed from Weber's "ideal types" (*Idealtypus*) as a means to understand the nature of various religious groups, how these groups operate, and why they are formed. Max Weber first introduced the terms as tools to aid him in his analysis of historical data. The "church" and the "sect" were not classifications but rather idealized types of religious bodies from which he could launch a comparison (Swatos 1976: 133). These terms were borrowed by Ernst Troeltsch in his *The Social Teachings*

of the Christian Church (*Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen,* 1912), and were picked up by H. Richard Niebuhr in his *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929). Niebuhr's book was published in English a year before the translation of Weber's *Protestant Ethic* appeared in 1930 by Talcott Parsons, and served for many as an introduction to Weber's thoughts. However, Niebuhr's reading of Weber was heavily influenced by Troeltsch, who had used Weber's Ideal Types of "church" and "sect" (and incidentally added his own "mystical" type) as broad classification devices. Sociologists, following Troeltsch and Niebuhr's lead (though both were concerned theologians first and foremost), became increasingly distant from Max Weber's heuristic use of the terms in his "ideal type" construct and adopted a more taxonomic use for the terms. Whereas Weber employed the church and the sect as models for comparison, ideals that represent the polar extremes of a religious body's relationship to their society/environment, they increasingly became used as classifications (with additional and sub-classifications added over time). We therefore see the issue of complexity in functional analysis, drawing attention away from Weber's original use for the terms.

By the time Richard Niebuhr had articulated the economic lines of denominationalism, and wrote his treatise to encourage ecumenical developments, the seeds had already been sown to move in that direction. A significant portion of Pentecostals were already becoming more socially and economically mobile, and there was a significant push toward non-denominationalism among "Spirit-filled" Christians. Pentecostalism continued to attract the marginalized to its ranks, which were the focus of sociologists as they elaborated and extended church-sect theory in a Parsonian framework. These sociologists would by and large come to the same conclusions regarding Pentecostalism and its role in society, though there is a noticeable progression toward a more sympathetic and inclusive perspective. Still, the ministries of Aimee Semple McPherson, William Branham, and Oral Roberts, while undoubtedly sharing a Pentecostal heritage, stand out in stark contrast to the generalities presented by sociologists. And yet these ministries were among the most successful Pentecostal ministries in the first half of the twentieth century.

Looking at the relationship between Pentecostalism and church-sect theory, it becomes apparent that sociologists had differing perspectives on Pentecostals. This seems directly related to the intentions of the individual study. We cannot easily compare Richard Niebuhr's (1929) perspective of Pentecostals to that of Milton Yinger (1957), as Niebuhr was writing with the goal to discourage denominationalism in Christianity, while Yinger was focused on detailing a comprehensive account of the formation of sects, and the dialectics that exist and create and sustain these sects (or cause them to dissipate). Yinger

has a specific illustrative purpose for Pentecostalism to aid the development of theory, whereas Benton Johnson's (1961) work with Pentecostals led him to a critique of church-sect theory. Johnson's critique would resonate with many scholars who found the church-sect typology confusing and unhelpful. This would lead to the rejection of church-sect theory by many sociologists. Before Hollenweger's *The Pentecostals* (1972) appeared the study of Pentecostal groups was useful only insofar as it served the development (or critique) of theory. In sociology, the theories in question, when Pentecostals were mentioned, were invariably linked to Max Weber. Whether it was through the functional framework articulated by Talcott Parsons, the illustration of sectarian processes, or comparison with *The Protestant Ethic*, the work of Max Weber was at the center of sociological analyses of Pentecostals.

Secularization Theory

Secularization theory also pays homage to the Weberian tradition, though Max Weber never proposed a theory of secularization. Rather he noted processes of rationalization, which he believed were inherent to processes of modernization (Warner 2010). Weber undoubtedly believed that the secularization of the world was probable, if not inevitable, yet he refrained from developing a theory of how this would come about. His work on rationalization as demonstrated in *The Protestant Ethic* was employed to describe the development of the "spirit of capitalism," and was not used to form a theoretical model for secularization. His vague allusions to secularization should be indicative of his reluctance to form such a model.

Despite what his interpreters would declare in his name, Weber's work rarely made prescriptive or prophetic declarations, but rather tended to focus on solving specific sociological quandaries. Perhaps his most famous declaration is found in *The Protestant Ethic* when he describes the effect of modernity as an "iron cage" (or "shell as hard as steel"), but even here Weber is careful not to make hard and fast predictions. He says:

> No one knows who will live in this cage in the future or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. (Weber 1958: 182)

Harvey Cox explains how *The Protestant Ethic* was influential in furthering the secularization thesis: "Max Weber initiated the discussion by suggesting that although Calvinism had provided the original value foundations for modernity the religious substance was being displaced by the very worldview

it had spawned" (Cox and Swyngedouw 2000: 4). Essentially, all of the tools to support the secularization thesis are found in Weber's work, particularly Weber's obsession with processes of rationalization. While implicit in *The Protestant Ethic*, it is understood that the rational discipline required of the Calvinist was intrinsically tied to modernization, scientific discovery, maximizing efficiency, and cultivating a rationalistic approach to all areas of life; all of these were thought to work against religious institutional power and religious belief. It is in this sense that Cox declares "this revolution was devouring not its children but its parents" (Cox and Swyngedouw 2000: 4).

Though this seems to be largely where theorists derive the strongest Weberian case for secularization, Weber's most quoted phrase with regard to secularization is undoubtedly "the disenchantment of the world" (*Entzauberung der Welt*), which Weber used to describe "the fate of our times" (Weber 1922). Clearly Weber saw this disenchantment, sometimes translated as "de-magification," as the direct result of processes of rationalization. We can therefore confidently conclude that Weber had believed that secularization was an inevitable by-product of modernization; however, a theory of secularization is far from established in any of Weber's work. Hence, this lone quote and inference are all that can be used from Weber's work when discussing secularization theory. Likewise, it would be inaccurate to call Weber the innovator of a theory of secularization. We can only say that Max Weber, like many others before and after him, expected to see religion and magic play a decreasing role in social life.

Pentecostal Ethic for Development

Lastly, the recent emergence of a Pentecostal ethic for development draws directly on Weber's *Protestant Ethic* to provide a theoretical model for economic development in the twenty-first century. Led by Peter Berger, the trend recognizes Pentecostals as possessing an equivalent to what Weber described as an ethic of inner-worldly asceticism. However, Weber's thesis was situated in a specific historical context, a factor that has been shown by many to be a crucial factor in explaining the validity of Weber's thesis and the problems of duplicating the theory (Coleman 1968; Stokes 1975). This is largely disregarded in the current hypothesis, and consequently the hypothesis has yet to find substantial evidence to validate the claims.

The investigation and subsequent link between contemporary Pentecostalism and Weber's Protestant ethic really begins in 1985 at Boston University. In that year, Peter L. Berger established the Institute on Culture and World Affairs (CURA) with two questions in mind: (1) where can an equivalent of Weber's inner-worldly asceticism be found today?; and (2) what is its relation to development? (Berger 2004).[1] The research initially

materialized into two focused projects, one led by Gordon Redding on overseas Chinese entrepreneurs that culminated in the book, *The Spirit of Chinese Capitalism* (1990), and the other led by David Martin on Pentecostalism in Latin America that culminated in the book, *Tongues of Fire* (1990). In a speech given at Cornell University in 2004, entitled "Max Weber is Alive and Well, and Living in Guatemala: The Protestant Ethic Today," Berger elaborates on the connections between Pentecostals and Weber's Protestant ethic, drawing largely on the findings of Martin's work in Latin America. Berger presents a checklist of characteristics that constitutes Weber's ethic of inner-worldly asceticism. Though these characteristics are based solely on Weber's *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber's description is not as concise as Berger's summary, and therefore they are worth quoting here:

> 1. A disciplined attitude toward work (not just hard work, which one finds in many very un-Protestant places, but what Weber understood as the "rationalization" of work);
> 2. An equally disciplined attitude to other spheres of social life, notably the family (Weber's notion of "life-discipline");
> 3. A deferral of instant consumption, resulting in saving and, eventually, capital accumulation and social mobility (if you will, what psychologists call "delayed gratification");
> 4. And all of this in the context of a worldview at least relatively free of magic (Weber's "disenchantment of the world");
> 5. A strong interest in the education of children (originally based on the Protestant insistence that the Bible should be read by everyone);
> 6. And the propensity to create voluntary associations of non-elite people. (Berger 2004)

Berger notes that the final two characteristics were not given much attention in Weber's work, though have grown to high levels of significance through the work of subsequent sociologists approaching history through a Weberian lens.

After presenting this checklist, Berger introduces the Pentecostal movement in Latin America as a new "ascetic" cultural movement in opposition to Catholic cultural norms. Principally, Pentecostalism encourages moral discipline through the proscription of alcohol and extra-marital sex. It encourages discipline with personal finances and discourages extravagant spending associated with *fiestas*, *quinciañeras*, and so on. Additionally, Berger argues, following Martin (1990), that Pentecostalism is "a culture

that is radically opposed to classical *machismo*" and could be considered to be a "women's movement" (Berger 2004). Generally Berger affirms the correlation between Pentecostalism in Latin America and Weber's Protestant ethic, and more importantly, he confirms the effects of this correlation have shown increased social mobility and a growing Protestant middle class. However, he notes that there is a wide margin of diversity in Latin American Pentecostalism, and some strains may not be compatible with the Protestant ethic. He specifically refers to the Prosperity Gospel as "[deviating] from the Weberian concept" (Berger 2004).

Application

Church-Sect Theory

In each of the three theories, Pentecostalism has made a significant appearance in the various attempts of application. Church-sect theory initially benefited from research of Pentecostal groups, as it seemingly confirmed the nature and trajectory long associated with "sects." Pentecostalism frequently played an important role in the fieldwork of sociologists such as Walter Goldschmidt, Liston Pope, and Milton Yinger, among others, who sought to utilize and expand church-sect theory with hard data. These earlier works represent the shift described by Sean McCloud (2007) from biological and scientific explanations of what attracts people to which religion, to an examination of social and economic factors driving people to this or that faith. Pentecostalism was uniquely situated as a sect (or at least viewed as a sect) experiencing significant growth, growth that was correlated to economic decline. Parsons' theory of voluntaristic action, heavily based on the work of Max Weber, had immediate implications for social aspects of economic activity, and Pentecostalism's link with urban migration, economic hardships, and social dislocation appeared to offer a relevant avenue to explore these implications. In addition, Parsons solidified the position of functional analysis, which served as the sociologist's tool kit in the field. However, Benton Johnson's (1961) study of Pentecostal groups demonstrated that they were socializing in dominant American values, contrary to common assumptions. This played a part in Johnson's critique of church-sect theory, a critique that was followed by many more from other scholars, and led to the eventual abandonment of the theory that had become too complex and ambiguous to be of any use.

Secularization Theory

Secularization theory was perhaps so taken-for-granted that it was rarely applied to the extent church-sect theory was grafted onto religious groups.

Rather, it served as the paradigm in which many intellectuals (not just sociologists) worked. Hadden (1987) argued that it appeared more like an ideology than a theory, and called for its desacralization. Possibly the height of secularization theory was reached in 1967 with the publication of Peter Berger's *The Sacred Canopy*, in which he outlined processes of secularization. Secularization was defined by Berger as "the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from domination of religious institutions and symbols" (1967: 107). Though his definition refers specifically to the public presence of religion in society, he clarifies by saying "as there is a secularization of society and culture, so there is a secularization of the consciousness" (1967: 107-108). Therefore we can see that Berger's understanding of secularization is a comprehensive one.

Generally speaking, Berger presented the secularization theory as might be expected. It is heavily rooted in Weberian references and labels the "capitalist-industrial economy" as the original source from which secularizing forces come into being (1967: 109). He also demonstrated the close relationship between Christianity and the modern capitalist-industrial economy in the fashion of *The Protestant Ethic*. Berger suggested that "the Western religious tradition may have carried the seeds of secularization within itself," and consequently concluded that "Christianity has been its own gravedigger" (1967: 110, 129).

However, Berger's contribution to secularization theory is more profound than the standard formula. Specifically, he proposed the secularizing effects of globalization through the creation of increasingly pluralistic societies. Berger states, "Modernity has plunged religion into a very specific crisis, characterized by secularity, to be sure, but characterized more importantly by pluralism" (Berger 1979: xi). His argument is that with multiple religious influences in a given society "religion can no longer be imposed but must be marketed" (1967: 145). With religious contents acting as commodities and religious institutions subjected to economic models of competition, Berger contends that standardization and differential marginalization are inevitable outcomes among competing religious groups. In addition, the market model makes the consumer aware of multiple plausibility structures. In other words, pluralism forces the religious believer to recognize that their sacred reality is subjective, whereas in societies dominated by a single religious structure, adherents accepted "the" objective sacred reality (1967: 151).

Despite the well-developed theory about processes of secularization presented by Berger in *The Sacred Canopy*, sociologists (including Berger himself) increasingly had trouble substantiating claims that religious belief was on the decline. The most glaring contradiction to assumptions held by secularization theorists was the increasing popularity and spread of

Pentecostalism, particularly in the so-called Third World. This also included many new forms of Pentecostalism that were thriving despite sociologists' claims that religion was fading. Though there are those that continue to claim that the world is becoming more secular, this is largely dominated by alternative views of what secularization may imply, rather than the traditional understanding that it simply implied that fewer people were adopting religious beliefs.

The state of secularization theory mirrored the fate of church-sect theory in that it became saturated with varying and conflicting definitions of what secularization could mean. Stark (1999) proposes that secularization was generally understood, and generally expected, as the decline in individual piety and personal religious belief (which would naturally have a secularizing effect on societies). The introduction of alternative definitions of secularization into the discussion, according to Stark, "permits some proponents of the thesis to shift definitions as needed in order to escape inconvenient facts" (1999: 251). Even by 1967, the theologian Larry Shiner had identified so many working definitions of secularization that he could classify them into six different categories: (1) decline of religion; (2) conformity with "this world"; (3) disengagement of society from religion; (4) transposition of religious beliefs and institutions; (5) desacralization of the world;[2] and (6) movement from a "sacred" to a "secular" society (Shiner 1967).

Pentecostal Ethic for Development

The third hypothesis, led by Peter Berger, makes use of Weber's *Protestant Ethic* to confront Pentecostalism directly. Whereas the former theories featured appearances by Pentecostalism, this hypothesis was formulated specifically for Pentecostalism. Therefore the significant role Pentecostalism played in the trajectories of the previous two theories appears as accidental, but here we see this hypothesis as intrinsically tied to the Pentecostal movement. In the same way church-sect theory and secularization theory were consistently applied to society, often without supporting evidence or sometimes with evidence to the contrary of their respective hypotheses, it appears the Pentecostal ethic for development is also being proposed without evidentiary support.

Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori collaborated in 2007 to conduct research that led to the publication, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*. They identify a new type of Pentecostalism which they call "Progressive Pentecostalism." Emerging out of the 1990s, Progressive Pentecostalism is described as socially engaged and actively invested in its individual communities through charitable and "development-oriented" ministries (2007: 30). Though Miller and Yamamori do not refer directly to

Peter Berger, their work echoes the comparison between Pentecostalism and Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic*, saying the "lifestyle of Pentecostals does not differ substantially from Weber's description of the Puritans" (2007: 164). Though their research produced several factors that "strengthen the link between Pentecostalism and economic advancement" (2007: 169), there is no substantial evidence to support these claims. Relying heavily on anecdotal evidence, Miller and Yamamori's work offers no hard data to warrant the formation of a new category of "Progressive Pentecostalism." Elizabeth Brusco's critique of the book also points to lack of depth behind the individual accounts presented by Miller and Yamamori, saying, "the case reports are somewhat shallow in nature, and occasionally read like fund-raising letters from an international aid charity" (Brusco 2009: 118).

The largest application of Peter Berger's Pentecostal ethic for Development was carried out in South Africa in 2008 by the Centre of Development and Enterprise, culminating in the publication, "Under the Radar: Pentecostalism in South Africa and Its Potential Social and Economic Role." Following the link proposed by Berger between Pentecostals and Weber's inner-worldly ascetic ethic, the publication seeks to expose hidden capital in Pentecostal groups in South Africa. The research project fails to provide real evidence that this is the case, and in some cases presents evidence to the contrary (see Gifford and Nogueira-Godsey 2011). Nonetheless, the hypothesis is maintained even without supporting data. This resembles the tendencies of church-sect and secularization theorists who maintained their respective positions for some time even without supporting evidence.

Acceptance

Church-Sect Theory

Church-sect theory was in a continuous stage of development, until it reached a point that it suffered from its own complexity, and the increasing discoveries of exceptional cases, such as represented by the Pentecostals. Until that point, however, there was no alternative that organized religious involvement and simultaneously classified religious behavior. The theory was largely embraced by the community of scholars studying the formation and trajectories of religious groups who used it to explain the relationship between different types of religious groups and society. Moreover, it created a paradigm in which one could work on a variety of perspectives pertaining to religious grouping and belief. Coleman (1968), bemoaning the widespread criticism of church-sect theory that had developed in the 1960s, called it one of the two "mainstays of continuity of thought concerning the inter-relationship between religion and society" (1968: 55).

However, lack of consensus and a plethora of definitions eventually took its toll on the successes of church-sect theory. Allan Eister claimed in 1967 that conceptualization of church-sect typology among sociologists had become "unreliable" and consequently the "use of church-sect typologies seems scientifically untenable" (Eister 1967: 85, 88). In an even more scathing criticism, Erich Goode concluded in 1967 that "unless it undergoes a radical revision which is universally accepted by researchers and theorists in the field, church-sect must be seen as a dead concept, obsolete, sterile, and archaic" (Goode 1967: 77). From Goode's perspective, the theory "has no power to explain or elucidate" (1967: 77). By 1974, John Snook voiced the general feeling that church-sect theory had "probably reached its limit" and suggested parameters for an alternative to church-sect theory (Snook 1974: 192).

Secularization Theory

Secularization theory has followed a similar trajectory to church-sect theory in several aspects. In fact, secularization theory may be the only sociological model that was more often taken for granted than church-sect theory. If the boisterous crash of a theory falling from prominence is indicative of the status from which it fell, then secularization theory fell from great heights indeed. Peter Berger, the sociologist who was once renowned for his lucid construction of social realities in *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), is now perhaps best known for his public admission that he was wrong about the inevitability of secularization. Few others have come forward so candidly as Berger to admit their overzealous faith in secularization, though many have subsequently changed their position on the issue. However, it never really has been a single issue. In fact, you could not even really call it a single theory. It is more accurately described as a paradigm in which many theories have been presented, often differing greatly in substance. Still, like much of Weber's work, there is a general sense about what is meant by "secularization" and this is more often assumed as articulated.

Jeffrey Hadden famously exposed secularization theory's elevated, and undeserved, status in his presidential address at the annual meeting of the Southern Sociological Society in 1986, "Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory." He argued,

> ...secularization theory has not been subjected to systematic scrutiny because it is a *doctrine* more than it is a theory. Its moorings are located in presuppositions that have gone unexamined because they represent a taken-for-granted ideology rather than a systematic set of interrelated propositions. (Hadden 1987: 588)

Hadden's words exposed the nature of the acceptance of secularization theory as an ideology to which sociologists subscribed. The similarities between the trajectories of church-sect theory and secularization theory have been noted by William Swatos, Jr. and Kevin Christiano in their 1999 article, "Secularization Theory: The Course of a Concept." They note that both the terms "church-sect" and "secularization" were introduced by Max Weber, but did not appear significantly in American sociology until the late 1950s (1999: 209). The comparison culminates in the question "is 'secularization' an analytic tool or a value judgment?" — suggesting that the same question was applied to the terms "church-sect" and resolutely determined to be a value judgment masquerading as an analytical tool (1999: 211).

The impact of Pentecostalism on secularization theory can be seen in the work of former prominent secularization proponents. Peter Berger, Harvey Cox and David Martin have all dedicated a significant portion of their post-secularization career researching and publishing on Pentecostalism. Secularization theory, similar to church-sect theory, was befuddled by the expansive growth of Pentecostalism and its peculiar resistance to sociological categorization. Interestingly, both church-sect theory and secularization theory have roots in the works of Max Weber, though neither share a straightforward origin with the German father of sociology of religion.

Pentecostal Ethic for Development

It is difficult to say to which heights Peter Berger's Pentecostal ethic for development will soar. It has the support of David Martin (1990; 2002), whose studies in Latin America provided the initial foundation on which the hypothesis was built. The Centre for Development and Enterprise supported it fully, even after data failed to confirm the hypothesis. Studies in Russia and Ukraine were carried out under Christopher Marsh and Artyom Tonoyan (2009), and a global study by Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori (2007) was constructed along a similar vein. Additionally the hypothesis has gained the consistent financial backing from the John Templeton Foundation to carry out various research initiatives. Among these proponents, however, there seems to be little diversity in the manner in which the hypothesis is approached. Weber's Protestant ethic is accepted as the model for stimulating economic growth, and little effort is made to qualify this. This is odd considering the history of the *Protestant Ethic* thesis, a history marked by failed attempts to apply the Protestant ethic as a model for economic growth. In this way, it might be said that the Protestant ethic thesis is taken-for-granted, and functioning in much the same way as secularization theory once did.

Prospects for the Protestant Ethic

In light of the pattern just presented, there are several questions which arise. Firstly, we may ask if the Protestant ethic is reemerging as an ideology, as might be suggested by the way it is employed in the works of those supporting a Pentecostal ethic for development. Only time will tell, though currently it remains contained to a fairly tight network surrounding Peter Berger's associates and funding from the Templeton Foundation. How far this network will extend, however, is unknown. There have been some attempts to critique the developments directly, most notably Birgit Meyer (2007; 2010) and Paul Gifford (2011). Others, such as Joel Robbins (2010), have acknowledged the developments with a skeptical eye. There is also a plethora of preexisting work that would seem contrarian to the hypothesis and offer an alternative to the Pentecostal ethic for development, such as that of Jean and John L. Comaroff (1998) on "Occult Economies." Another alternative framework has been provided by Manuel Vasquez (2009), who situates Pentecostal belonging (or citizenship) located both globally and in the afterlife. In this framework Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic* is interpreted "materialistically" to describe a Pentecostal characteristic that he identifies as a "polymorphous pneumatic materialism" (Vasquez 2009: 276).

Another question that arises from the pattern presented here is related to the trajectory of the Protestant ethic thesis. In the other examples, church-sect and secularization theories, we saw great success followed by mass abandonment. We must remember, however, that the Protestant ethic had already been relegated to the historical context in which it was originally employed due to the repeated failures to demonstrate similar results. This new trend must be seen as a reemergence of the theory after a relatively significant period since it was last used as a model for economic growth. We can surmise, however, that like church-sect and secularization theories, without substantial evidence to support its claims, or the discovery of evidence to refute these claims, its fall from intellectual praise will be swift.

With the failure of three grand theories we must also question the relevance of Weber's work in the contemporary era. This, however, should be done with trepidation, as one does not quickly cast aside the father of an academic discipline. This thesis has shown that these theories, as they developed, were quasi-Weberian and had significantly departed from the intentions and work of Max Weber the sociologist. The primary contribution from Weber, let us remember, was an introduction into the place of ideas in the causal web of collective action. This is, and will always be, the essence of sociology of religion. Lachmann noted this was still the case despite the frustrations of applying Weberian models in new contexts, saying "there are

thus good reasons, in the study of human action, to give careful attention to the plan which guides and directs action" (Lachmann 1971: 7). However, it seems there needs to be a reinvestigation into which plans are predominantly involved in directing action today. Max Weber predicted that religious ideas, which were originally responsible for creating a "spirit of capitalism," would become increasingly irrelevant as the "spirit of capitalism" could and would function without them. As Bethany Moreton has noted, "...God did not die, but rather was incorporated into the very structure of secularism itself" (Moreton 2009: 86-87). The ascetic ethics of Protestantism were now ingratiated with the spirit of capitalism, which is arguably more pervasive than Protestantism has ever been. In any case, Protestantism no longer has a monopoly on the virtues of hard work and delayed gratification. Moreton notes, "This worldliness in turn, Weber argued, undermined the original spiritual motivation, and gradually the habits of thrift, diligence, self-control, and industry took a life of their own" (2009: 87).

In this context, we can rightly question the relevance of an inner-worldly ascetic ethic, if it exists, in the Pentecostal movement. What impact could an inner-worldly ascetic ethic have in the contemporary economic climate? Moreton has further argued that the Protestant ethic thesis was a self-destructing ethic that simply could not power the economic system *ad infinitum*. "According to this narrative, the Protestant ethic then ran up against mass consumption in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Prudence could not power an economic order built on the multiplication of desires" (2009: 87). Consumer capitalism has since transferred the calling that Weber's Protestants found in work to a calling that was found in leisure. In other words, "Salvation gave way to self-realization" (2009: 87).

These cultural changes have inevitably altered the way individuals approach work and economic activity, and likewise affected the way economic growth can be achieved. However, taking these changes into account does not solve the conundrum when faced with the application of Weberian principles to the current economic climate. The central problem is the misuse of *The Protestant Ethic* as a functional tool for promoting growth. Lachmann noted this in 1971 when he stated,

> Economic growth is of course a subject still very much in fashion. But it is gradually coming to be recognized that growth processes are processes of historical change, that they are prompted by many forces, not all of them economic, and that, whatever may be the best way of studying them, it is impossible to reduce the rich variety of forces in operation to one simple analytical model. (Lachmann 1971: 5)

It also seems fairly obvious to the Weberian scholar that Max Weber himself was not promoting a strictly functionalist interpretation of religious belief and economic growth. Rather, situated in a long running debate between the materialist and idealist perspectives, Weber demonstrated the potential that belief can affect and shape social and economic processes. However, it was not Weber's intention to provide a model for social reality in which one religious belief is inserted and capitalist enterprise is retrieved. Weber's work, in the intellectual context of his day, added complexity to the question about what shapes societies and economies, not simplification. However, Weberian sociology has largely tended toward simplifying and universalizing Weber's concepts, which has consistently resulted in failures to apply his principles in the twentieth and now, twenty-first century.

Furthermore, we must ask ourselves what type of growth is being called for, in which sectors, to the benefit of whom, and in what manner will it be achieved? These questions have been completely swept under the carpet in the current discourse put forth by Peter Berger in a Pentecostal ethic for development, and have been largely unspoken by those writing with Max Weber's ghost over their shoulders since *The Protestant Ethic.* Kevin Lewis O'Neill's book *City of God: Christian Citizenship in Postwar Guatemala* (2009) exposes the privatizing and individualizing effect Pentecostalism is having on social and economic issues in Guatemala. The result is that it "releases the nation state, multinational corporations, and organized crime from being held accountable for, among other things, unsafe streets and a faltering economy" (O'Neill 2009: 4). Furthermore O'Neill finds that while Pentecostalism is providing Guatemalans with a "deep sense of meaning," it simultaneously "[limits] the avenues through which they can act" (2009: 4). This seems as a paradox, particularly because it is often taken for granted, and argued by Peter Berger, that an increased sense of social and economic agency translates into actual increased agency. However, O'Neill's work serves as a poignant objection to this assumption.

Reclaiming the Dialectic in the Study of Pentecostalism

Pentecostals have been described and characterized in many different ways with regard to their relationship to society. For much of its history this relationship was described with one or another form of deprivation theory. Recent work has rejected this approach, as the increasing middle class constituency of Pentecostalism makes traditional deprivation theories untenable. However, this focus on a dialectical relationship, exemplified in the work of Robert Mapes Anderson (1979), is consistent with traditional sociological approaches. As Stephen Hunt notes, "the sociology of religion,

despite its contrasting and divergent approaches, has historically and primarily focused on the dialectical relationship that religion has with wider society…" (Hunt 2010: 179).

The Pentecostal ethic for development represents a radically different approach to the study of Pentecostalism. Firstly, while Pentecostals have been described negatively and sympathetically, they have rarely been described positively. There are numerous scholars that have approached the study of Pentecostalism objectively, with tact and sensitivity, but for several decades the sociologist has refrained from value-based judgments regarding religious beliefs and practices. Peter Berger maintains that his work is not value-based, but rather an objective look at the consequences of the Pentecostal movement. Generally, his personal work reflects this disposition, though one wonders how long these consequences can be maintained without data to support them. Secondly, this recent trend is void of the dialectical relationship that has defined the sociological study of religion. It appears with little insight into who Pentecostals of today are, and the societal factors that have made Pentecostalism attractive to them. Peter Berger's earlier work provided incredible insight into the dialectical relationship between humanity and society, in *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) and *The Sacred Canopy* (1967). Yet, these insights seem to be strangely absent in the Pentecostal ethic for development. The dialectical relationship attributed to Pentecostals and society (specifically modern societies) has for so long centered around deprivation theories, which has shown to be untenable due to changing demographics among Pentecostals. Consequently there appears to be a void when it comes to unraveling a Pentecostal dialectic with society today. The approach is likely best undertaken through focused case studies, such as that by Simon Coleman (2000), which brilliantly delves into the "culture" of global Charismatic Christianity through the analysis of the transnational Swedish Word of Faith movement.

Conclusion

The historical journeys of Pentecostalism and the "ghosts" of Max Weber reveal an affinity for the extreme. Pentecostalism was first regarded as an object of derision by sociologists, now it is heralded as the savior of the so-called Third World. Of course, this journey is not presented by Pentecostalism's sociological advocates of today. Rather, Pentecostalism is introduced as a *deus ex machina* that has suddenly appeared to solve problems for which few have solutions. However, Pentecostals were originally seen as those that capitalism rejected. Incompatible with capitalist enterprise they turned to ecstatic religion to forget their failures, though now the pendulum

has swung and Pentecostals are now presented as the super-capitalists. Pentecostals once were thought to be the epitome of "primitive" religion; now they are ultramodern.

The primary lesson to be learned from the ghost of Max Weber through the hindsight of more than a century of Weberianism is that the observation of a correlation, even a direct causation, is not grounds to form and apply a theory. Society is immensely more complex than we believe, perhaps more than we can comprehend. Models and broad theories have historically raised more questions than answers, and therefore should be approached with trepidation. The nature and processes of society are not static; therefore sociology cannot afford to be endlessly devoted to any theory of social processes.

Notes

1 Speech given at a conference entitled "The Norms, Beliefs, and Institutions of Capitalism: Celebrating Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*" in October 2004, hosted by the Center for the Study of Economy & Society (CSES) and funded by The John Templeton Foundation. Peter Berger's speech, "Max Weber is Alive and Well, and Living in Guatemala: The Protestant Ethic Today," is made available online by the CSES and is available at http://www.economyandsociety.org/ events/Berger_paper.pdf (accessed on 21 January 2012).

2 In Shiner's explanation of the fifth concept he includes Weber's concept of "disenchantment" (*Entzauberung*) with the world caused by processes of rationalization.

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