

human destiny. However, rather than jettisoning all previous practices, Christians “compromised,” and transformed the earlier practices to fit the new thinking.

While Christianity and other religions were an improvement on magic, Frazer thought, the outcome of religious rituals is not always predictable either. When they pray to gods, religious people realize that their requests are not always met. However, religious people have a number of explanations for these instances. Maybe they have not made the proper offering required by the god. Perhaps they displeased the god earlier and have not yet made amends. The list of possible reasons for not having your prayers answered is a long one, and so, Frazer says, the religious person does not expect automatic results.

Frazer said that religion was therefore an improvement over magic. When they do not get the results they seek, religious people can explain why, as believers in magic cannot. However, Frazer thought, religion has problems of its own because it presumes that God or the gods interfere in nature. That means that there are not any rigid patterns in nature such as the laws of physics and laws of chemistry. Suppose that during an earthquake a rock is falling through the air. A physicist would say that it will continue to fall until it hits something. But if the rock is heading toward a baby carriage and the mother has just asked God to protect her baby, then, according to religious believers, the rock might change direction. Therefore, if prayer works, then the laws of physics are not as fixed as we might think.

According to Frazer, recognizing this problematic aspect of religion prompted some “acuter minds” to move on from religion to a still more advanced way of thinking – science. Like magic, science posits correlations between events, but through observation and experimentation science arrives at correlations that are consistent and readily duplicated, while magic does not. Both magic and science are attempts to control the world, then, but science is more reliable.

It is not terribly surprising that Frazer expressed so much confidence in science and the power of reason. He was living in an age of stunning scientific and technological progress. His confidence was shared by many in his generation and beyond. As well, the evolutionary model introduced by Darwin was extremely influential. The combination of modernity’s confidence in reason and Darwin’s theory of evolution resulted in the belief that religion is but a stage in human evolution, destined to be outgrown. This view of religion was expressed most provocatively by two major thinkers: Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud.

Negative Views of Religion

Karl Marx (d. 1883): Religion as the Opiate of the Masses

Instead of trying to understand a variety of religions, Karl Marx concentrated on European Christianity in his own time. As a philosopher contending with the negative effects of the Industrial Revolution on working people, his main concern with religion was its impact on society. And he believed it was very negative. Religion was not his only target. His condemnation of capitalism made him extremely unpopular with those who benefited most from it: the wealthy industrialists. And in his fierce criticism of religion – especially

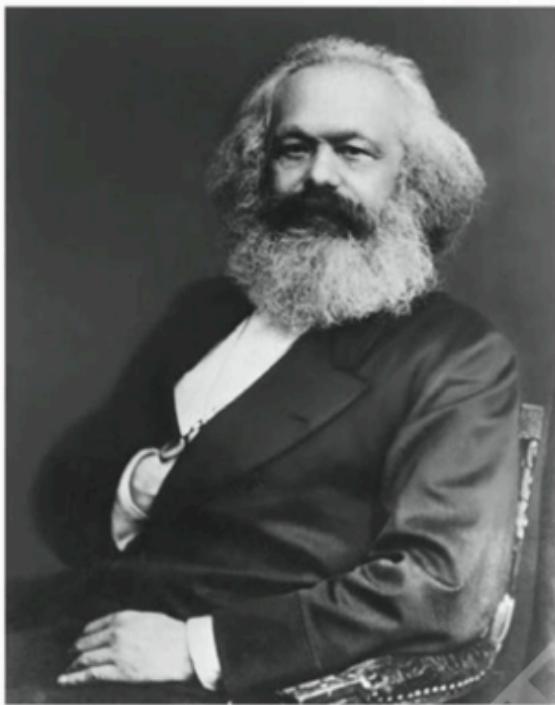


FIGURE 3.7 Karl Marx. © Bettmann/Corbis.

the Christianity dominant in industrial Europe – he was not alone. His slightly younger contemporary Friedrich Nietzsche (d. 1900) gained notoriety for postulating that “God is dead.” However, Nietzsche’s work was so idiosyncratic and unsystematic that it had little lasting impact on Religious Studies. The influence of Marx, on the other hand, is still palpable in the field.

To understand why Marx had such a negative view of the Christianity of his own time, we need to understand what life was like in 19th-century Europe and North America. The Industrial Revolution was changing society in unprecedented ways. People were moving from rural areas, where they had done farming and craft work, into big cities, where they worked in factories and lived in cramped apartments or row houses. In 1800, 20% of Europe’s population lived in cities, but by 1851, that figure had nearly doubled.

The workweek was six days, and the workday ten to twelve hours. There were no minimum wage laws and no government rules about safety. Accidents were common, and hundreds of workers died each year. Factory owners could run their factories as they pleased, to make maximum profits. Children as young as five

worked in the textile mills; mines could legally employ ten-year-olds. Factory smokestacks belched tons of filthy smoke, without restrictions. For workers who were injured or laid off, there were no benefits to help them get by. And when a worker became too old to work, there were no pensions or social safety nets. In some industries such as mining, the factory owner maximized his profits by building a “company town,” so that he owned all the houses and the stores, where workers were forced to buy their food and clothing at high prices. Many workers were in constant debt, so that no matter how miserable the job, a worker could not afford to quit, because, as an old song says, “I owe my soul to the company store.” The lives of factory workers, in short, were little, if any, better than the lives of slaves. They had next to nothing – except their labor, which they sold each day to the factory owner.

Marx knew firsthand what this system was like, because his friend Frederick Engels was the son of a factory owner and together they visited many factories. In his book *Das Kapital* (*Capital*), Marx analyzed the society produced by the new industrial capitalism and compared it with earlier societies.

Capital is something a person owns to make a profit. In ancient and medieval times, before manufacturing, farming was the basic form of production. Food crops and livestock were the basic commodities, and so land was the basic form of capital. Those who owned the land had the peasants working on it to produce a profit in the form of crops and livestock. Landowners could also rent out some of their land to make a profit. Most people who did not own land did not have any capital. Peasants had to make do with whatever food and shelter the landowners allowed them.



With this division between rich and poor, life in ancient and medieval societies was hard for the lower classes, Marx says. But medieval life looked almost pleasant compared with the lives of 19th-century factory workers. For one thing, most medieval workers lived in rural areas, where they were surrounded by fresh air and the natural world. In crowded 19th-century cities such as London and New York, people lived in filthy tenements, breathed polluted air, and drank polluted water.

Another difference was that in ancient and medieval times at least the landless poor had craft skills from which they derived satisfaction. Craftspeople such as seamstresses and blacksmiths worked hard, but they could take pride in what they produced. Indeed, they took enough pride in it to make the name of their craft their last name. Dozens of last names even today are the names of crafts: Weaver, Potter, Cook, Taylor, Carpenter, Shepherd, Farmer, etc. *Smith* is an extremely common name just because in the Middle Ages “smith” was the general term for a craftsman.

In contrast with the pride people took in craftwork, Marx says, people who work in industrial economies, trading their labor for wages, are “alienated” from their labor. Rather than the satisfaction they might have derived from the process of making a unique product from beginning to end, workers in the capitalist system receive only wages. One worker’s wages are distinguishable from others’ wages only in amount. So laborers cease to derive a sense of identity from their work, and begin to identify with their wages and what they can acquire with them. They relinquish a sense of being someone who does something in particular, and make do with an identity based on what they own. In Marx’s view, this “identity of having” is inherently unsatisfying, since the only way to distinguish oneself is by “having” more than someone else. This sets up a dynamic in which people are in constant competition to own more than their neighbors. Thus, the capitalist system has negative effects on social relations, as well as personal identity. People become, in effect, slaves of the economic system.

Marx believes that religion is an integral part of industrial capitalism’s ability to control societies. He says that religion keeps the oppressed workers cooperative and submissive, willing to spend six days a week at mind-numbing, physically exhausting toil. Religion – and he meant specifically Christianity – does this by convincing people that we serve God by doing our daily work and obeying those in authority – the mayor, the bishop, and the foreman at the factory. Our work is hard, but our earthly lives will be over soon. If we have been submissive and obedient, we shall go to heaven, where we shall be rewarded with comfort and all our needs will be fulfilled. “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him.” (I Corinthians 2:9)

Without religion, Marx thinks, factory workers would confront the misery of their lives and do something to change it. They might well revolt against the oppressive factory owners. However, Marx says, religion dulls their sense of suffering as they focus on the life to come. In short, religion works like a strong painkilling drug. It is the “opiate of the masses.”

If we look back through history, Marx observes, religion has always taken the side of the rich owners of capital against the poor workers. Marx calls the owners of capital the *bourgeoisie* and the workers the *proletariat*. The Hebrew Bible not only permitted slavery but regulated it, as did Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. But again, Christianity was his primary target. Christianity that taught, “Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and



trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ" (Ephesians 6:5–9) and "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves." (Romans 13:1–2) Marx concludes:

The social principles of Christianity justified the slavery of Antiquity, glorified the serfdom of the Middle Ages, and are capable... of defending the oppression of the proletariat... The social principles of Christianity preach the necessity of a ruling and oppressed class... preach cowardice, self-contempt, abasement, submission, and humility....

The social principles of Christianity declare all the vile acts of the oppressors against the oppressed to be either a just punishment for original sin and other sins, or trials which the Lord, in his infinite wisdom, ordains for the redeemed.

Marx's critique of religion was harsh indeed, but it certainly was taken seriously by the Russian revolutionaries who overthrew the Czar in 1917, and by the revolutionaries who took control of China in 1949. Both tried to eliminate religion from their new Communist states.

Sigmund Freud (d. 1939): Religion as Neurosis

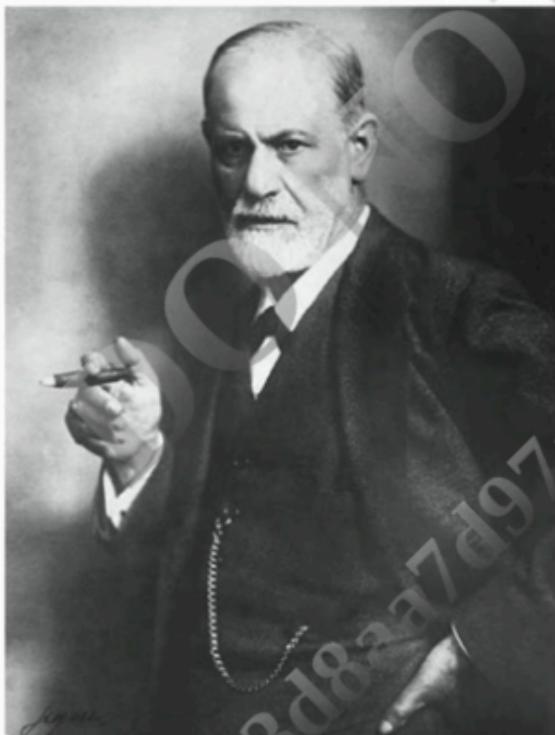


FIGURE 3.8 Sigmund Freud. © Bettmann/Corbis.

Sigmund Freud, who developed psychoanalysis, the basis for psychiatry, had an equally negative assessment of religion, but for very different reasons. Freud revolutionized our understanding of the human mind, and when he applied his new ideas about the mind to religion, it came out looking far from noble or virtuous.

Before Freud, most people thought of the mind as something that gives us the truth about the world and about ourselves. It was generally assumed that people could reliably report on their own beliefs, emotions, and motivations. However, from his studies of people with psychological problems, Freud concluded that the mind is not a truth device but a coping device. Its function is to help us cope with our problems and get through each day.

Some things that are in our minds do not cause anxiety and so we may be fully aware of them. If asked about the weather, for example, most people could give an honest answer. Things like this are in the conscious part of the mind. However, many things in the mind are saturated with emotions, and so they are not known objectively in the way we know whether or not it is raining. Imagine a child who has been abused by her



father. If she is asked, "Do you love your father?" her feelings about her father may not be readily available in her conscious mind. Rather, Freud says, her negative feelings about her father have probably been repressed – pushed out of her conscious mind into her unconscious mind – so that she may well not express her hatred for her father. Admitting such a thing would be very uncomfortable and could have extremely negative repercussions. So she is likely to say "Yes, I love my father," and may even believe it in her conscious mind. This helps her cope with her problems for the moment. Her hatred for her father, which is locked away in her unconscious mind, however, will cause her psychological problems later on, such as difficult in forming healthy relationships with other men or trusting people in positions of authority. Indeed, Freud says, virtually all our psychological problems stem from our early relationships with our parents.

The new techniques of psychotherapy that Freud developed were designed to bring thoughts and feelings out of the unconscious into the conscious mind, where they could be faced and dealt with. One of them was the analysis of patients' dreams. In our dreams, Freud says, thoughts and feelings that are repressed in waking life are expressed.

This new understanding of psychological problems and of the mind as a coping device influenced Freud's understanding of religion. He sees religion as arising not from the rational conscious mind, but from the unconscious mind. Religious beliefs, he says, are not based on what we have found to be true. They are based on what we would like to be true. Religion is a way for us to cope with problems and get through life. As a coping device, religion works to a certain extent, but it causes major problems of its own, just as the child's repression of her negative feelings for her father does. Freud's overall assessment of religion is that it is a kind of neurosis, that is, a mild form of mental illness.

Freud wrote three books on various aspects of religions. In *Totem and Taboo* (1950) he presents a theory of how religion originated, and in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) Freud presents a new interpretation of the story of Moses in the Bible. It is his *The Future of an Illusion* (2010) that presents a general assessment of religion in culture.

The basic motive for religious belief and ritual, Freud says, is fear of the dangers in life, and a desire to be reassured that everything will be all right. Early humans faced a dangerous and often confusing world every day. The two main sources of their anxiety were other human beings, on the one hand, and nature, with its many surprises and threats, on the other. Early on, they learned to handle social problems by making agreements, setting up rules, and showing consideration for other people. When they wanted something from other people, for example, they would be polite and offer them something in return.

As early humans faced the natural world, Freud said, they carried over their ways of dealing with other human beings. They treated volcanoes, thunder, and rain, for instance, as if they were the actions of gods with whom they could make polite requests, negotiate, and do the other things that worked with people. If they needed rain for their crops, they could sacrifice something to make the rain god happy. If the volcano was rumbling, they could beg the volcano god to calm down. By believing in gods and praying to them, they made the natural world an extension of their social world, and this gave them a feeling of control over natural events.

According to Freud, the gods had three functions: to exorcise the terrors of nature, to reconcile people to the cruelty of fate, and to compensate them for what they endured and

what they gave up by living in society. Originally, humans believed in many gods, but eventually monotheism evolved to streamline polytheism. Instead of having dozens of gods, each controlling a different area of life – the crops, sailing, childbirth, etc., now there was a single God, who was not just all-knowing and all-powerful, but a Father who cares about his children. They showed him respect, prayed to him, offered him sacrifices, and followed his commands. All of this belief and practice made life feel more secure and, at the same time, laid down the moral rules that made civilization possible.

Whatever benefits religion brought long ago, however, Freud says that we now have better ways than praying and sacrificing to deal with illness, crop failures, and other natural forces. These better ways come under the heading of science. In science we try to figure out patterns in nature and we check them with experiments. When we come up with a hypothesis, we test it against the data, and we accept the hypothesis only if it fits the data. In religion, on the other hand, we accept beliefs because they make us feel secure. We believe that a Heavenly Father is watching over us, for example, not because we have discovered this to be true, but because we want it to be true.

Freud has a name for a belief based on such wishful thinking. He calls it an “illusion.” Normally, that word implies that a belief is false, but Freud uses the term in a different way. His term for a simple false belief is “delusion.” In ancient times, for example, people believed that the earth is flat. When this was shown to be false, most people switched to the belief that the earth is round. This kind of correctable false belief is a delusion. However, religious beliefs are not correctable, Freud says, because people do not check them against their experience. Rather, they accept those beliefs for the way they make them feel. This makes religious beliefs illusions rather than delusions.

This analysis of religion in *The Future of an Illusion* has drawn many more responses than Freud’s ideas about Moses or his theory of how religion began. This is because the ideas presented in the other two books were based mostly on speculation about what may have happened in the past. They were therefore “unscientific.” However, his claim that religion is based on a reassuring belief in a father figure is testable, and it is criticized because – for one thing – it does not work for all religions. Buddhism and Taoism, for example, do not have a divine father figure. Even in the Western monotheistic religions, God is not always portrayed as a loving Father. In some interpretations of Christianity, as we shall see (Chapter 6), God is strict and authoritarian, and he punishes the whole human race for the sin of the first human beings. Indeed, because of Original Sin, everyone deserves eternal torment in hell. This is hardly the kind of belief people accept because they want it to be true.

So Freud’s theory of religion does not seem to cover all religious traditions, nor even all forms of Christianity. But it does reflect the kind of evolutionary thinking combined with utmost confidence in reason that characterizes modernity. And in their very boldness, such negative theories of religion helped separate the scholarly study of religion from the normative or devotional approaches that characterize dogmatic theology. In particular, they reflect the 19th-century hypothesis that religion represents an intermediate stage of human development that is bound to be replaced with more advanced, non-religious – scientific – approaches to life’s challenges. Less pessimistic but likewise evolutionary theories of religion are evident in the work of the founding fathers of yet another modern field of study: Sociology.

Sociology of Religion

Emile Durkheim (d. 1917): Modernization Theory

Psychology – the study of people's mental states and behavior – did not originate in Europe. It had precursors in classical Greek and medieval Islamic thought. Similarly, sociology – the scientific investigation and critical analysis of how society operates – has representatives among classical Greek and medieval Islamic thinkers. However, as an independent field, based on supreme confidence in human reason, sociology is quintessentially modern European, and Emile Durkheim is generally regarded as its founder. He established the first department of sociology, at the University of Bordeaux in 1895.

Durkheim studied all aspects of human social organization, including religion. In fact, he believed that religion is essentially social. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, he describes what he considers the earliest and simplest religion as totemism, the veneration of totems by tribes. A totem is an animal with which a tribe identifies. The Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest, for example, carve totem poles featuring bears, crows, and whales. Sometimes they name themselves after the totem animal. Modern sports teams do something similar when they name themselves the Lions or the Dolphins, but totems have a deeper meaning to the group than the simple symbolism of a mascot. As we saw in Chapter 1, the totem often figures in the foundational stories held sacred by the group and is believed to have a metaphysical or spiritual relationship with the group.

The function of totemism, Durkheim says, is to meld people into a cooperative group. By focusing on the group identity through rituals about the totem, their religion encourages them to override their selfish concerns, for the good of the group. The function of these rituals is "to bring individuals together, to increase contacts between them, and to make those contacts more intimate." (Durkheim 1915, 348)

Durkheim thus defines religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden." (Durkheim 1915, 47). This distinction between "sacred" and "profane" things was readily accepted within the field of Religious Studies. "Sacred" meant "holy" or "special" and therefore to be treated with reverence; it is to be treated differently from everyday "profane" things. Whether it is a totem or other object, or a place, a person, or even a name or word, its specialness must be marked. In this sense it is "forbidden" to the uninitiated. In Durkheim's terminology, the sacred totems are *taboo* – something that should not be touched except under special conditions.

We shall see in Part II that diverse traditions identify a wide variety of sacred things, and often the thing or person or word is considered sacred because of its connection with the supernatural. But for Durkheim the sacred is not something supernatural. The sacred is the realm of the social, where people are concerned with the common good.

Because the totem represents the group, what people are actually venerating in their religious rituals is their own social group. In Durkheim's words, "The sacred principle is nothing more nor less than the society transfigured and personified." (Durkheim 1915, 347). The term "profane," by contrast, covers people's everyday activities such as work, in which they are concerned only with themselves and their families. So Durkheim concludes his definition of religion: It is "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things,

that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite in one single moral community called a Church all those who adhere to them.” (Durkheim 1915, 47)

This theory of Durkheim is called “functionalist” for the obvious reason that it defines religion in terms of its function. But whereas some functionalist analysts believe that the function could be fulfilled by things other than religion, Durkheim sees the role of religion in promoting group solidarity as irreplaceable. Without the solidarity engendered by religion, he fears that we would find ourselves back in social chaos. In fact, in his studies of suicide, Durkheim suggests that one of its causes is the loss of social orientation provided by religion.

Durkheim was one of the key figures in the development of what is called “modernization theory,” which forecasts that all societies would inevitably develop industrialized economies just as Europe had. With industrialization, societies reorganize. They build cities (urbanize), and develop new institutions (bureaucracies) to organize their lives. Durkheim also observes that, as societies modernize, individuals develop increased autonomy and a correspondingly decreased sense of group identity. He worries that, without the strong sense of belonging to a group, individuals may lose the sense of wellbeing provided by group solidarity. The other great figure in the development of sociology, Max Weber, likewise theorized about the role of religion in social evolution, but attributed a different role to religion.

Max Weber (d. 1920): The Protestant Ethic and the Secularization Thesis

One of Max Weber’s contributions to Religious Studies is his naming of “ideal types” of leadership. In *The Sociology of Religion* (1922) he discussed three ideal types of religious leader. First is the “magician,” which Weber describes as the shaman or healer, who has a charismatic style of leadership. The magician gets to be a leader by convincing people through sheer force of personality that he can offer practical benefits such as healing for their illnesses and rain for their crops. The second ideal type of leader is the “priest.” While magicians gain authority based on personal charisma, priests’ authority is a function of the official positions they hold. And while the magician is a one-person operation who does whatever seems appropriate to him, the priest is part of a bureaucracy that has extensive training, many rules, and a system of pay and promotion. Weber’s third ideal type of religious leader is the “prophet,” from the Greek terms meaning to “speak” (*phao*) “for” (*pro*). The prophet speaks for a god. Even more than magicians, prophets’ authority comes from their personal charisma. They are respected because they convince people that they are speaking for a god. If the audience does not hear the god’s voice in the message of someone who claims to be a prophet, she will not be recognized as a prophet.

However, Weber’s best known contribution to Religious Studies is his theory that early Protestantism made modern capitalism possible. As he studied various European cultures of his own time, he noticed that the leaders of business and banking were overwhelmingly Protestants. Catholics tended to be workers and tradespeople or, if they were in the middle class, doctors, lawyers, or teachers. So Weber asked, “What is the connection between modern business and Protestantism?” “And why did capitalism start in Europe rather than in India or China, and in the 1600s rather than earlier or later?” His reflections on these questions became his most famous book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.



Weber's explanation is that the new beliefs and practices taught by Luther and Calvin (see Chapter 6) fostered in people attitudes and habits that made them want to be successful in business. The "spirit of capitalism," Weber says, was for "the earning of more and more money, combined with the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life." (Weber 1958, 53)

The Christian tradition of medieval Roman Catholicism that came before Luther and the Protestant Reformation did not valorize worldly success. Indeed, it warned of the dangers of being concerned with money. Jesus, after all, said that it is "easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven." In Catholicism, Weber observes, a religious life is oriented to the world to come, heaven, not to this world. And so the fully religious person is a priest, a monk, or a nun, not a banker or a factory-owner. Because worldly success was suspect, Catholic laypeople tended to be farmers, lower-level workers, doctors, lawyers, and teachers.

In Weber's analysis, the Protestant leader whose ideas did the most to foster capitalism was John Calvin (see Chapter 6). In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* he wrote that, because of the "original sin" of Adam, all human beings are born in a morally corrupt state. We inherit an "innate depravity from our very birth." We are born so depraved, in fact, that we are incapable of doing anything good on our own. We have no free will. All we can do by ourselves is sin. In this dreadful condition, the whole human race deserves eternal damnation, Calvin said. Every baby is naturally headed for hell, and without God's intervention, all would end up there. However, fortunately for some, God has absolute freedom to do whatever he wants, and he chooses to save some people. They are called "the elect." They are no better than anyone else, but God predestines them for eternal happiness in heaven.

Understandably, those who accepted Calvin's teachings, such as the Puritans, were anxious about their eternal fate. Since everyone deserved damnation, death was scary. Unlike Catholics, who believed in free will and in the value of "good works," Calvinists thought they were incapable of doing anything to help themselves reach heaven. Catholics had the Mass and other sacraments, they prayed to the saints to intervene with God for them, and they said special prayers to address special needs. But Calvinists had none of these techniques for calming their anxieties about damnation. There was one thing they did have, however, that could allay their worries about whether they were saved or damned. This was success in their work.

Here is how Weber explains the connection between work and salvation. The world exists for only one reason, Calvin taught, and that is to glorify God, its creator. The main way we do this is through our daily work. Our religious calling is not, as in Catholicism, to withdraw from worldly activities and pray. It is to be successful at our jobs. We are on earth to work. The harder we work and the more successful we are, the more we glorify God, and the more likely it is that God has predestined us for heaven rather than hell. Success in business does not *earn* people salvation; success simply *indicates* that they are already favored by God and predestined for salvation.

This new worldview produced what Weber calls the **Protestant Ethic**. It valorized hard work and career success, and cast a doubtful eye on play and leisure. The virtues it praised were self-control, self-denial, the ability to delay gratification, thrift, and simple living. Weber calls this "inner-world asceticism." It made Protestants well suited to starting

businesses, opening banks, engaging in trade, building factories – all the things that helped promote modern capitalism in Europe and North America.

Weber's articulation of forms of religious leadership and his thesis that Protestantism made capitalism possible were two of his major contributions to the analysis of religion. A third was his introduction of what is called the **secularization thesis**. Again, reflecting modernity's overarching confidence in reason, as well as the influence of Darwin's theory of evolution, Weber characterizes the modern world (and the "spirit of capitalism") as "calculating" or rational. Modernization is a process of "intellectualization" of life, and a reciprocal decline in reliance on "mystery" or the unpredictable promises of religion. He calls this process "disenchantment" (*Entzauberung*) and "secularization." Secularization is thus characterized by diminishing appeals to the divine in daily life, especially in practical and economic matters, and the declining influence of institutionalized religion. We shall return to this topic in Chapter 10.

Conclusion

Weber's secularization thesis is treated by many scholars as more than a description; it is treated as a prediction. As Rodney Stark, a leading critic of the theory, pointed out in 1999, Weber was not alone in his prediction. Stark traces this line of thinking as far back as the 18th-century theologian Thomas Woolston, who predicted the end of Christianity by 1900, and Frederick the Great, who wrote in the 18th century that religion "is crumbling of itself." In the same century Voltaire gave religion fifty more years of life; and Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1822 that every "young man now living in the United States" will abandon Christianity for Unitarianism. Stark summarizes: "For nearly three centuries, social scientists and assorted western intellectuals have been promising the end of religion. Each generation has been confident that within another few decades, or possibly a bit longer, humans will 'outgrow' belief in the supernatural." (Stark 1999)

However, the dire predictions for religion contained in the secularization thesis turned out to be false. As we shall see in Part II, religion continued to thrive, and new religions continued to be born. As a result, Religious Studies continued to develop as an autonomous field, although it remains multi-disciplinary. In the next chapter we shall survey approaches to the study of religion that became fundamental to Religious Studies.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some reasons that it took so long for educated Europeans to begin to study religion scientifically?
2. Discuss William Robertson Smith's response to opponents of source criticism: "A book that is really old and really valuable has nothing to fear from the critic, whose labours can only put its worth in a clearer light, and establish its authority on a surer basis." (Smith 1892, 17)
3. In 1900 the Catholic Church was opposed to source criticism and other modern methods of studying the Bible. The pope insisted, for example, that Moses had written

