

Secularization and the Economy: The End of Capitalism?

*By Richard Christy**

International and national discussions of the economy have never been as intense, all-consuming, or global? The economy is the focus of personal conversations, newscasts, and global affairs panel discussions. While the state of national and international economies has been the topic of personal and public concern during times of recession, depressions, natural disasters, commodity shortages, and famine, the current debates seem distinctly different. Why at a time of potential individual and national prosperity is their growing concern that private, national, and global economies may collapse? Why are scientific and rational thought so full of promises in an age of reason seemly unable to propose solutions to avoid a potential global economic crisis? Is the analysis provided by rational scientific thought unable to provide insight into this economic crisis because it ignores Weber's conclusion that capitalism is rooted in a religious /ethical foundation? What happens to capitalism if the religious/ ethical foundation of capitalism declines? Is the theoretical conclusion of Weber being willfully ignored or minimized by the assumption that religion no longer informs modern economic activities? The objective of this paper is to introduce the classical theoretical analysis of Max Weber that links Protestantism religiosity to economic behavior. Secondly, to provide current literature, statistics data and theoretical research on secularization that indicates the place of religiosity in capitalist societies. While Weber identified the religious link between protestant Christianity precepts and capitalism, with the increasing secularization of post-modern societies can capitalism survive? What happens if the religious/ ethical roots of economic behavior are no longer sustained? As the subtitle of my paper suggests are we witnessing "The End of Capitalism?" if the historic religious/ ethical roots of capitalism are lost and can capitalism, as we know it, survive?

Weberian Controversy

To discuss industrialization and the rise of capitalism is to address the “Weberian Controversy.” Weber published his historic analysis of religiosity and economic behavior, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* in 1905. He argued that a late form a protestant theology was essential for the emergence of capitalism. Since its publication, sociologists, historians, political scientists, and theologians have debated the impact of religious norms on economic behavior. Did Protestantism have a significant impact on the rise of capitalism as Weber argues?

There are two camps of critics of Weber’s position, those that argue capitalism with a religious incentive that existed prior to Protestantism and those that challenge the post-reformation impact of Protestantism on capitalism. Weber’s goal was not

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to substitute the one-sided materialism of Marx for a one-sided spiritual causal relationship of religion and economic behavior, but to focus on “one of the fundamental elements of the spirit of modern capitalism, and not only that but all of modern culture: is based on the idea of the calling.” (Weber 1958:180).

For Weber, the concept “calling” was fundamental to capitalistic culture. So fundamental was a “calling” in a capitalist culture, that individuals acknowledged their calling and preformed labor as an end in and of itself. Puritans sought their callings, and according to Weber his generation of workers, work because “when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order.” (Weber 1958:181).

With the publication of the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, it was immediately considered a classic but “subject to harsh criticism by many writers for its central assertion that the ascetic regulation of economic life coupled with restraint, prudent saving and a stringent attitude to work was religiously induce.” (Morrison 2006:313). Morrison defended Weber’s position arguing that Weber highlighted a “remarkable congruence between Protestantism and the development of modern capitalism” (Ibid: 314) and observed the rise of capitalism in those countries where Protestantism took hold.

According to Morrison, Weber had five key objectives, first to show that beginning in the seventh century the majority of commercial centers occurred as Protestantism was taking hold, second Protestant maxims placed a stamp on economic organizations such as attitudes to work, punctuality, and saving, third Calvin’s religious doctrine lead to economic conduct based on restraint, order, and a rejection of luxury and excess, forth the restrained economic conduct was not only an outcome of Calvin doctrine but was also a psychological motive and ethical religious precepts for controlling material reality and its temptations and fifth Calvin’s doctrine of predestination, being one of God’s elect, created an attitude to work and a rejection of luxury.

Together, these five factors were a dramatic contrast between capitalism and the economic behavior of the Middle Ages. Morrison points out that it is asceticism, the inner conscious self-denial of the material world and worldly pleasures are secondary to higher religious goals. In capitalism Weber argues that “asceticism had become a category of social action regulating conduct in the world, since only in societies where capitalism flourished was self-denial linked to economic success and achievement.” (Ibid: 314)

As noted before and worth repeating, it was not Weber’s goal to substitute a one-sided spiritualism for the one-sided materialism, he could not ignore that “one of the fundamental elements of modern capitalism, and not only that but all modern culture: is based on the idea of a calling.” (Weber 1958:180) Weber argues that “a calling is what is most characteristic of the social ethics of capitalistic culture and is in a sense the fundamental basis of it.” (Ibid:180) Protestantism and specifically the idea of a calling gave capitalism its ideological foundation.

In the Middle Ages a “calling” meant to serve God and the church. The Reformation reshaped “calling” to provide a worldly as well as otherworldly meaning. As Weber argued, the worldly application of the Protestant concept of a “calling,”

included hard work, frugality, self-control, aestheticism, and accountability. For Weber, these norms clearly contributed to “the fact that business leaders, and owners of capitalism and commercially trained personnel enterprises are overwhelmingly Protestants.” (Weber 1968)

What happens to the nature of work if the notion of a “calling” no longer exists? What happens to the nature of work and Weber’s thesis if a calling is no longer foundational to capitalism? Can modern social institutions and specifically capitalism survive? What do we learn from businessmen of the current state of the work ethic? Is the Protestant work ethic on the decline?

As limited as these observations are, a businessman, the owner of a retail store complained that he will not be hiring university students because of their economic behavior, and attitude to work. He said that when he hires staff to work eight hours a day, he is lucky if he gets five hours of solid labor from them. These employees arrive late, take extra time at lunch and breaks and repeatedly use their cell phones. After a two-weeks probation period he lets them go and many of them are shocked. When he explained to one former employee that he was not punctual, dependable, accountable, or hard -working, the former employee responded, “I did not know that is what you expected!”

Similarly, the founder and owner of a law firm explained how difficult it is for him to hire and keep a law clerk. As the owner of a busy law firm, he needs dependable, and experienced staff with existing computer skills. Staff must be willing to learn and adapt to the specific needs and requirements of the law firm. In the last two years he has hired and fired five law clerks. The applicants’ resumes and interview skills are impressive but their work ethic, attention to instructions, the lack of responsibility, and dependability made it impossible to offer them permanent employment.

Scott Gallaway describes the current work ethic in his description of his employment behavior in Notes on Being a Man.

When I was younger, I’d mostly end up getting fired or I’d quit. For example, in college I’d be hungover and show up late or having lunch with a friend and remember suddenly I was due at work two hours earlier....and then I would say something stupid or make an inappropriate Joke and get canned, Things haven’t changed much.
(Gallaway 2025: 74).

What are these individuals observing? Are they observing some isolated incidents or the growing trend of the individualization and rationalization of work? What will an examination of secularization, defined as the decline in religious practice and public worship, reveal concerning the current religious/ethical framework of Western society? What does the statistical data on religiosity in contemporary society indicate about the foundation of social institutions? What does the data suggest about the continuation of capitalism?

Secularization and Contemporary Society

In The Sociology of Religion, Harold Fallding states that sociologists have three concerns 1) the place of religion in society 2) how religion is pursued and 3) why individuals, groups, and societies pursue religion. What does Fallding observe about the pursuit of religion in Canadian society? How does Fallding affirm that the historic relationship between religious behavior and the economy exist as Weber argues?

Fallding notes that The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism was just one of Weber's studies of world religions. For Fallding, as for Weber it was only Protestantism that had a prominent impact on economic behavior. Individuals pursued their economic behavior, in the form of capitalism as an expression of their religious faith. As noted, earlier it was the presence of the religious/ethical calling in Protestantism that Weber argued was an essential and fundamental component not only for capitalism, but overwhelmingly the social behavior of modern culture.

Weber's answers Fallding's third question, why did individuals, groups and societies pursue religion? To Protestants work was a blessing and a service to God. Individuals fulfilled their "calling," by hard work, self-control, aestheticism, accountability, and thrift. Weber argues that this is why so many prominent business leaders, owners of capital and entrepreneurs were Protestant.

A Protestant, or a group of Protestants participated in a form of Christianity that acknowledged that whatever you do you, "do it as unto the Lord." Such religious imperatives in Weber's view were essential to the emerging economy known as capitalism and for the participating in the "new" economy.

Morrison builds on Weber's position of a callings arguing that "in modern capitalism asceticism had become a category of social action regulating conduct in the world, since only in societies where capitalism flourished was self-denial linked to economic success and achievement." (Morrison 2006). Morrison identifies other variables leading to the decline of the feudal economy, but he supports Weber's position stating that there were "non-economic considerations of capitalist development discussed by Weber in the relationship between the economic and religious spheres," (Morrison 2006). By comparing the economic conditions in other countries, Weber demonstrated, using Morrison's words how Protestant religious maxims provided "an unambiguous stamp on the economic organization of Western capitalism." (Morrison 2006). What is the impact on the economy if individuals, groups and a society ignore, erodes, or destroys the religious/ethical foundations of capitalism due to secularization? By secularization, I mean the decline of religious practice and public worship. What do we learn of religious behavior from the statistical data of Canadians?

According to Statistics Canada, religious affiliation in Canada has changed dramatically. In 1971, almost 90% of Canadians identified as Christian. By 2021, 53.3% claim to be Christian. In 1971, 5% of Canadians had no religious affiliation and in 2021, 34.6% have no religious affiliation. The United Church of Canada, one of the largest Canadian religious denominations had a membership of 14.6% of the total population in 1985 and in 2019 the membership is 3.8%. How would Weber view these changes? What conclusion would Weber make about a religious foundation to social action in Canada? Is it logical to assume the survival of a

religious foundation to capitalism after observing these religious trends? What would academics and pundits consider to be the future of capitalist behavior and the survival of capitalism with such a decline in Canadian religious behavior? In an age of science and reason it is easy for academics to ignore the place of religion in society. Is it also easy to assume that religious precepts no longer impact private and collective economic behavior. From a theoretical and philosophical position what is the place of religion in post-modern society according to Fallding?

Secularization and Post-modern Society

In the Sociology of Religion, Harold Fallding argues that sociologists are concerned with why individuals, groups, and societies pursue religion. Fallding is interested in the place of religion in advanced industrial societies. He observed the growing secularization of post-modern societies with a systematic decline in public worship, religious teaching, religious participation, and religious affiliation to the extent that “secularism indicates the exaltation of attitudes into a completed systems and organization.... thus, becoming a religion of religion.” (Fallding 1972). With the decline of Western traditional religion, various forms of ism such as positivism, hedonism, materialism, consumerism, communism, secularism, among others seek to fill the void. Each proposed ism is profoundly different from the Protestant norms observed by Weber that provided the mental culture necessary for the emergence of capitalism. Is it possible that another ism could provide the ethical foundation necessary to sustain capitalism or a possible emerging new economic order? For Fallding the answer is no if “the single overall concept which expresses.... the fracturing of life’s unity is secularization.” (Fallding 1968)

If we accept as Weber did, that the emerging religious norms were essential for the formation of capitalism, is it possible that with increased secularization, we are witnessing the deconstruction of capitalism? Is it possible that there is a willful, systematic, deconstruction of religious values that threaten capitalism and other social organizations that support the existing social order?

Secularization in Canada and the United States

What does further statistical and theoretical data tell us of an existing religiosity in Canada and the United States? Is it possible that religious statistics and academic research will identify public and private expression of Judeo-Christian religious affiliation and social behavior in post-modern societies.

As noted earlier according to Statistic Canada, “in 1971 almost 90% population age 15 and older identified as Christians. By 2021 Canadians aged 15 and older identifying with Christianity dropped to 53.3%.” (Cornelissen 2021) In 1971, 5% of ages 15 years and older reported no religious affiliation and in 2021, 34.6% reported no religious affiliation.

More significant than these national statistics is how respondents define the impact of their religious practice had on their day-to-day social activities. In 2019,

of the 68% Canadian who reported a religious affiliation, 54% reported their religion or spiritual beliefs were important or very important to them. However, only 23% said they participated in group religious activities at least once a month. Cornelissen also notes that reporting religious affiliation does not necessarily mean religion informs their everyday life. Of those who reported to having a religious affiliation, 18% reported that rarely or never participating in group religious activities or on their own and “considered their religious or spiritual beliefs to be of little or no importance to how they live their lives.” (Ibid). How do sociologists and philosophers interpret what these statistics mean in contemporary society?

In his collection of articles titled *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor asks the philosophical question, “what does it mean to say we live in a secular age?” (Taylor 2007) He writes that by “we” he means those who live in the West or more broadly those in the “North Atlantic world.” While secularity exists in other parts of the world as the Canadian statistics indicate, Taylor states that the existence of secularity is difficult to ignore. For Taylor, the pre-modern state was in “some way connected to, based on, guaranteed by some faith in, or adherence to God or some notion of ultimate reality.” (Ibid). He argues that the modern Western state has become freed of the religious/economic connection and religion has become a private matter. The connection between religion affiliation and social action is no longer self-evident. One understanding of secularity for Taylor has been the emptying from the public space of God or any reference to ultimate reality. As we engage in various “spheres of activities- economic, political, cultural, educational, professional, recreational – the norms and principles we follow, genially don’t refer us to God or to any religious beliefs.” (Taylor 2007).

Taylor examines in *A Secular Society* the changes that took place from a society in which it was impossible not to believe in God to one in which faith “is one human possibility among others.” (Ibid).

Taylor describes these changes in the chapter titled “The Malaise of Modernity.” Taylor observes three phases of secularity that he describes as the currents and counter currents of belief and unbelief. The first phase is how there came to be exclusive humanistic alternative to the Christian faith. The second phase involves multiple critiques against religion and the generation of a few unbelief that function as options to faith. The third phase is the fractured culture, that reached “its culmination in the latter half of the twentieth century” (Taylor 2007) along with it “a generalized culture of ‘authenticity’, or expressive individualism, in which people are encouraged to find their own way , discover their own fulfillment, ‘do their own thing’” (Ibid).

For Taylor, the mental culture of Western societies has dramatically changed as individualism and self-interest increase and religiosity, not to mention Protestantism, no longer inform individuals and social institutions. It is the centrality of expressive individualism, the primacy of reason, and the loss of personal choice that challenges the very idea of community and corporate responsibility. Expressive individualism, science, and reason appear to have become increasingly a liability. They challenge the very value of capitalism based on a calling, the dignity of work, stewardship of your resources, hard work, responsibility, and accountability. Without those values that emerged from Protestantism in the initial phase of capitalism, how long can

capitalism, historically based on cooperation, trust, support, fair competition and community survive in secular societies based on expressive individualism? What Taylor calls the malaise of modernity, Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung and David Brooks also troubled by the emerging mental fabric of Western society that is moving from civility not to mention from its religious roots. In **Glittering Vices**, De Young presents a discussion of a modern reaction to and a new interpretation of the seven deadly sins in the writings of Pope Gregory I and Thomas Aquinas. In his book the **Road To Character**, Brooks observed the changing goals of American university students and the emerging vocabulary choices of the American population.

DeYoung, an associate professor of philosophy, realized that when she was in graduate school she was reluctance to contribute to her classes because of a vice identified by Thomas Aquinas as “smallness of the soul.” By reading the virtues and vices proposed by Aquinas, she realized that they could be a catalyst for “spiritual growth” and that “most of us would benefit from some deeper moral reflection and self-examination.” (DeYoung 2009). De Young argues that most of us would benefit from a process of moral reflection and self-examination. Notice how far remove this process is from what Taylor identifies as expressive individualism, “doing your own thing.” DeYoung argues that there are intellectual benefits and payoffs in such reflections by providing the individual with a deeper understanding of themselves and the world. She argues that the traditional meaning of the vices has shaped our culture and social institutions and still influences and informs individual behavior whether we accept or reject their original meaning.

When De Young asks individuals to list various virtues, they “name things like honesty, courage, kindness, loyalty and fidelity, for vices, the list usually include qualities like cowardice, greed, and selfishness.” (De Young 2009) Without knowledge of the original meaning of virtues and vices found in the list of Pope Gregory or Thomas Aquinas these are some of the contemporary ideas of virtues and vices. They indicate major differences from Pope Gregory list of vainglory, envy, sadness, avarice, wrath, and gluttony, or Thomas Aquinas’s list of vainglory, envy, sloth, avarice, wrath, lust, and gluttony. The original religious and theological meanings have lost their authority to challenge and/or support a framework for economic and social behavior.

De Young found that “many voices in contemporary culture unfortunately, dismiss, redefine, psychologize, or trivialize” (De Young 2009) the seven deadly sins proposed by Gregory or Aquinas. Some dismiss the vices claiming that they are not moral problems at all.

Whether the seven deadly sins are a moral problem or not, De Young has identified the further secularization of Western society. The presence or absence of these historic imperatives could inform current social action. Envy, greed, sloth and avarice could seriously impact an individual’s or a group’s economic ideas and social actions. These concepts continue to inform those individuals seeking to integrate the moral, religious directives of Gregory and Aquinas into their economic action and to turn from the prevailing values of contemporary society.

While Weber identified a Protestant religious foundation to capitalism, the list of vices from Catholic theology by Gregory and Aquinas also became fixtures that guided Christian social and economic behavior. While the number and content of

the list underwent change, De Young argues that “by the time we get to Thomas Aquinas in the thirteen century, we find him synthesizing the wisdom of an amazing variety of predecessors in both philosophy and theology” (De Young 2009:29) to create a list to imprint the principles of moral theology and religiosity on society. The question for today is, do these values have the capacity to moderate and regulate social and economic behavior? De Young argues that for the first millennia the seven vices were at the heart of self-examination and moral formation both in the church and the broader society. After the Middle Ages and the Reformation, society moved towards modernity and increased industrialization. With modernity the seven deadly sins were increasingly marginalized and lost their impact on social and economic action. De Young notes that in contemporary discussion of virtues and vices seldom are the ideas of Gregory and Aquinas considered. De Young observes that if they introduced, they are simplified, rationalized, stereotyped, and the source of humor.

David Brooks is interested in the changing values of university students. He examines the changing social and cultural norms of college students in his book **The Road to Character**. He discusses the available statistical data on the norms of first year college students in the United States. In general Brooks notes the social and cultural values in America are increasingly materialistic. “College students now say they put more value on money and career success.” (Brooks 2015) The yearly data from UCLA nation-wide survey of college students indicates that in 1966, 80% of freshmen stated they wanted to develop a meaningful philosophy of life. In 2015 less than half stated that to be a goal. In 1966, 42% of students and in 1990, 74% of students responded that becoming rich was important.

Brooks also noted there has been a noticeable change in language and vocabulary used by the American population. Over the past decades there has been an increase in the number of individualistic words and phrases referring to “self,” “I come first” and a decline in words referring to “community” or “common goal.” Brooks notes that over the twentieth century words like “character,” “conscience” and “virtue” have declined and over the twentieth century “gratitude” is down 49 per cent. “humbleness” is down 52% and “kindness” is down 56 percent.” (Brooks 2015)

Is it enough to say that in Western society there has been a shift from the ideas of what can I do or how can I serve to who can I be and how can I stand out? There is a growing body of literature and public discussions focused on the decline on ideas of calling, public service, and self-restraint in postindustrial societies. What we are learning from Brooks analysis is the secularization of the ideals and goals of college students. What will be the economic ideas and actions of contemporary individuals? The evidence of the secularization of the West suggests that the Weber’s thesis of a relationship between religion and economic behavior no longer holds sway in the marketplace. With the decline, or as some would argue the collapse of Western religious tradition, what ism could emerge to fill the void?

For Durheim, it was positivism. Durkheim sought to encourage the moral rearmament of the French Republic by proposing a scientific moral order devoid of religious norms. Or could it be hedonism as documented in *How We Got Here: A Guide to Our Anti-Christian Culture* by Jonathon Van Maren. For Van Maren there has been an extensive secularization of society. He writes that he grew up in a society in which values “based on Scriptural revelation rather than the Sexual Revolution –

still held sway." (Van Maren 2024) He argues that the impact of the sexual revolution is so pervasive it now defines the social, cultural, religious, and economic norms of the West.

These examples of isms are just two of many that compete for dominance in contemporary society including but not exclusively, Christian nationalism, secularism, materialism, consumerism, communism, and Nazism. Each proposed is profoundly different from the Protestantism that Weber argued provided the mental culture and a social stability that gave rise to capitalism.

Values, mores, and laws inform personal and social behavior in society. Weber identified the mental culture of calling, hard work, frugality, and self-control at the core of capitalism. The capitalist economy flourished. But as capitalism became a global phenomenon the knowledge and adherence to its religious foundation are changing. What values and norms, whether religious or secular, could emerge to temper the expressive individualism of "looking after number one," endless amassing of wealth for wealth's sake or extreme individualism at the expense of the collective? Is it possible to expect a moral or ideological framework to emerge that could prevent what many journalists, pundits and social analysts label the unravelling of civility that challenges the survival of the social/economic institutions?

Davetian writes in *Civility: A Cultural History* that he differs with those who warn that the ability to be civil is beyond repair. While Davetian is sad at the financial and political attitudes and actions that make it difficult to maintain an altruistic outlook, he argues that "since the beginning of human history philosophers and priests have done their utmost to convince human beings to respect and get along with one another." (Davetian 2009) He argues that the civilizing process is incomplete and that we cannot become a truly civil society until we have an in-depth understanding of civility and uncivility. His goal is to provide a multi-dimensional review of civility from 1200 to the present day for France, England, and America. His goal is to study the social and personal psychology of human interaction in these societies regarding the practices of civility and the possibility of a "future civility ethic." Is it possible that he might discover a future ethic that would fill a void left by the impact of secularization of Western social and economic behavior? Is it possible that the analysis of 800 years of social history might provide an ethical guide for future social and economic behavior?

Davetian proposes definitions of civility at the personal and social level. He defines "courtesy and civility as the extent to which citizens of a given culture speak and act in ways that demonstrate a caring for the welfare of others as well as the welfare of the culture they share in common." (Davetian 2009) He argues that his definition permits him to study the micro and macro dimensions of civility. His definition also enables us to understand the responsibility and accountability that Protestants had for the economic and social wellbeing of others.

For Davetian, the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation were important and had an "immense influence on the individuals conceived of their place in the universe that was not as dependent on theological dogma." (Davetian 2009) Davetian noted that the rising educated university elite and merchant class responded to the emerging social philosophy and theology and moved beyond medieval dogma.

The intellectual and merchant classes became the growing force of social and intellectual change.

Davetian argues that Machiavelli clearly understood the spirit of his time when he wrote *The Prince* and recognized the opportunities and limitations of power in a secular society. According to Davetian, Machiavelli recognized the need of a “ordered environment” so that society did not fall into chaos. Recognizing the element of self-adjustment and self-restraint distinguished Machiavelli’s theory of socialization and interaction. Davetian points out that there is a point at which humans must restrain their ambition in the interest of individual and collective survival. Economic, political, and social behavior cannot get out of control if they are to be a service to the individual and society.

Davetian devotes the first part of his book to understanding the civility traditions of France, England, and America from 1200 to 1900 in order to understand the political, economic, philosophical religious and moral transformation of each country. While each society developed different civility preferences, the industrialization of each society did not substantially level their national identity or national ideology. Davetian noted that it was such factors as “political philosophy, system of government, religion intellectual history, geography, economy, familial norms, and the manner in which emotions were restrained and expressed.” (Davetian 2009). Extensive social and cultural forces taken together distinguished the differences in “value tendencies” between France, England and the United States concerning individualism versus collectivism, large or small power distances in positions of authority and uncertainty avoidance. It was the degree of risk, welcomed or avoided that shape and determined the values in these societies. His longitudinal study revealed that in periods of reformation and revolution each society made efforts to bring their mental culture back to civility.

According to Davetian each of these three societies have a great deal to teach contemporary societies about social and economic change. His conclusion concerning civility is that change is complex. To question the survival of capitalism and even Western society, changes in social norms will occur. There will be changes not only in religion but also in forms of civility. Such change may suggest the disintegration of society as we know it, but Davetian informs us that we may be witnessing another period of self-adjustment. The words of Machiavelli stand as a caution to the change agents and the most avid rebel or reformer that societies require a degree of stability to survive. Can Davetian’s study of civility temper the current theoretical debate on capitalism and renew those perennial religious /ethical norms as a necessary part of self-adjustment?

Conclusion

With the publication of the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Weber introduce the academic world to the idea that there was more to economic behavior than materialism. His idea that protestant Christianity provided a much-needed religious foundation for capitalism created an intellectual controversy. His observation that a calling, hard work, discipline, service, self-control, and frugality rooted in

Protestant theology ushered in an economic era that differed from the traditional economic behavior of Medieval society is still controversial. Morrison, in supporting Weber's position, elaborates on the congruence between Protestantism and modern capitalism. Are the all-consuming international and national debates on economic change a current example of the reluctance to accept the possibility of a spiritual rather than a material foundation to capitalism?

In accepting Weber's theoretical conclusion, the question remains what happens to capitalism if the religious/ethical foundation is lost or declines? Will capitalism survive if the norms of calling, hard work, frugality, self-control, aestheticism, accountability, and thrift decline or lost? Fallding argues that sociologists have concerns about how and why religion is pursued in society. As the global debate on the economy intensifies, surely we must consider Weber's analysis of religious/ethical norms and economic behavior.

The statistical data and theoretical research on religion indicates that the place of religion/ethical behavior in post - modern society is on the decline. The data from Statistics Canada and the theoretical and statistical analysis of Taylor, De Young, and Brooks suggest that the civil and the religious/ethical norms of society are being replaced. The literature indicates that secular values and norms, described as expressive individualism and "looking after number one" inform social and economic activities. While the social norms are not fully established to create a new social and economic order, there are obvious trends that suggest society is moving into a period of fractured culture, extreme individualism, self- interest and looking after number one.

Davetian takes a different position from those who warn that the ability to be civil is beyond repair. He writes that he is sad at the financial, political, and social action that makes it difficult to maintain an altruistic outlook in society. However, Davetian argues that history is full of examples of philosophers and priests attempting to convince human beings to get along with each other.

Like others, Davetian recognizes the unravelling of civility and the deconstruction of institutions. His goal in studying France, England and America is to identify a possible "future civility ethic." Is it possible that Davetian might provide an ethic that will fill a growing void? Will this civility ethic have the potential to provide a new phase of capitalism with a stabilizing foundation?

It is speculative to assume that we are witnessing the end of capitalism, especially if a future civility ethic can become a category of social action regulating conduct in society and the world. It is less speculative to assume that individuals will increasingly identify as having no religion, therefore increasing the secularization of post-modern society. With the possibility of a new civil ethic and increasing secularization, meaning the decline of religious norms, I would suggest that the greatest challenge will be how to share the rewards of a new capitalism throughout society.

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