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Chapter Three

RELIGIOUS PATHWAYS AND RELIGIOUS DESTINATIONS

We find religion at the crossroads of the sacred and significance. This is the starting point for our exploration of the religious labyrinth. It is, however, only a beginning. In the previous chapter we considered the meaning of the sacred and significance, the two key elements of religion. But the definition of religion says something more as well. Religion is also a process, a *search* for significance in ways related to the sacred. Although it can take many forms, every search involves two things: a destination and a path to reach it. As we venture further into the religious labyrinth, we will see that religion is vitally concerned with both the destinations pursued in life and the pathways taken to reach them. In this chapter, we examine some of these religious pathways and destinations and consider some of the ways they come together to form comprehensive religious orientations to the search for significance.

RELIGIOUS MEANS: PATHWAYS TO SIGNIFICANCE

All of the world's religions offer their members a pathway to follow in the search for significance. Far from smooth and undemanding, these routes are often portrayed as arduous. The Hindu hears that the path

is: "Like the sharp edge of a razor. . . . Narrow it is, and difficult to tread" (*Upanishads*, 1975, p. 20). The Christian is told: "Narrow is the gate and constricted the road that leads to life" (Matthew 7:14). The Buddhist hears the path to salvation likened to the difficulty of fording a roiling stream (Burtt, 1982). But the ultimate rewards awaiting the dedicated traveler, the religions say, are well worth the trek.

The faiths of the world may agree that the way is demanding, but they do not agree on the way itself. Perhaps no one put it more strikingly than Johnson (1959):

> For the sake of religion men have earnestly affirmed and contradicted almost every idea and form of conduct. In the long history of religion appear chastity and sacred prostitution, feasting and fasting, intoxication and prohibition, dancing and sobriety, human sacrifice and the saving of life in orphanages and hospitals, superstition and education, poverty and wealthy endowments, prayer wheels and silent worship, gods and demons, one God and many gods, attempts to escape and to reform the world. (pp. 47–48)

The diversity of religious pathways makes it impossible to focus on any single religious approach without ignoring or oversimplifying the nature of others (Streng, 1976). Neither, however, can we review religious pathways in all of their variety. Here we will simply illustrate some of the paths people take, following the lead of Pruyser (1968), who argued that religion is to be found in every psychological dimension. Emotions, thoughts, actions, and relationships are all parts of the paths people take in their search for significance. It must be stressed that these paths are not devoid of their own sacred value. "Let us beware," Jewish philosopher and scholar Abraham Joshua Heschel (1986) said, "lest we reduce the Bible to literature, Jewish observance to good manners, the Talmud to Emily Post" (p. 231). As means to valued destinations, religious pathways can develop a spiritual significance of their own.

Ways of Feeling, Thinking, Acting, and Relating

Feeling

For many people, the cornerstone of religion is feeling. Theologian Rudolf Otto (1928), in a highly influential book, *The Idea of the Holy*, described the power of religious feeling in dramatic fashion. The essence of religious experience, he said, is a "creature-feeling," an "emotion of a creature, abased and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures" (p. 10). This emotion, *the mysterium tremendum*, also has the qualities of a magnet: "something

that captivates and transports [the person] with a strange ravishment, rising often enough to the pitch of dizzy intoxication" (p. 31). For Otto, this feeling cannot be reduced to any other. It flows directly out of an absolutely convincing experience with the "Wholly Other."

The kind of personal encounter with God described by Otto may not be all that unusual. McReady and Greeley (1976) surveyed a representative sample of American adults and found that 37–50% of different religious groups had had an experience in which they felt as though they were very close to a powerful spiritual force. Many people, however, experience the sacred in less emotionally powerful ways. The transcendent may be approached through a more subtle, contemplative process, or as a personal friend or confidante the individual can rely on. The love for God growing out of human reason, knowledge, and comprehension described by Maimonides (Minkin, 1987) and Spinoza (1957) has a flavor to it different from Otto's passionate intoxicating feelings for God. Religion is certainly a way of the heart, but the heart is simply one of the ways of religion.

Thinking

Religion, to many people, is first and foremost a way of thinking. Few cultures have not incorporated religious perspectives, of one sort or another, into their schemas (cf. McIntosh, 1995) for viewing the world. These perspectives connect a conception of the sacred to the nature of people, the way that life should be lived, and the character of this world and whatever may lie beyond it. These are not simply matters for theologians and intellectuals, as even the briefest review of world history will reveal. Whether salvation is earned or predetermined, whether God's nature is singular or tripartite, or whether one has followed or strayed from the true religious path are questions that have had profound implications for individuals, communities, and cultures within the Western world. Yet we cannot stop here either, for religion is more than a way of thinking.

Acting

Joseph Campbell (1988) reported overhearing an American philosopher talking to a Shinto priest in Japan: "We've been now to a good many ceremonies and have seen quite a few of your shrines. But I don't get your ideology. I don't get your theology." The priest responded: "We don't have theology. We dance" (p. xix). Now the priest may have overstated his point. Clearly, he does have a way of thinking about life, the world, and the nature of transcendence. But his "theology" stresses

being and action more than thought. Among some groups, religion is less a way of thinking than it is a way of acting.

Actions are a part of all religions, even those that are more doctrinally oriented. Pruyser (1968) put it this way: "Millions of people stand, bend, stretch, fold their hands, move rosary beads, finger books, suppress coughs and sneezes, look their best, and act most solemnly for at least one hour per week, with the feeling that these are appropriate, necessary, or prescribed activities of religious value and relevance" (p. 175). But as Pruyser goes on to note, it is a mistake to view religious practices as simply "behaviors." Religious acts have power by virtue of their connection to the sacred. Careful attention to form and detail is required in religious practice because mistakes or irregularities can reduce their sacred value. In this sense, religious practices have to do with more than simple action, but with *how* one acts. They can become, as Pruyser describes them, a "craft," another way of religious life.

Relating

The focus on feelings, thoughts, and actions could lead to the conclusion that religion is simply a *personal* way of life. Indeed, in our pluralistic culture that values individual freedom and choice, religion is often seen as more a personal matter than a social experience. Bellah and his colleagues (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985) underscore the powerful current of individualism that has run historically through the stream of religious life in the United States from its founders, such as Thomas Paine who wrote "My mind is my church," to the majority of the population today who agree that religious beliefs should be independent of any religious institution. In their interviews with white, middle class Americans, they find that, for many, the heart of religion lies in the individual's personal relationship with God, a relationship that is ultimately self-centered. To illustrate their point, they cite a nurse who named her faith after herself: "I believe in God. I'm not a religious fanatic. I can't remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It's Sheilaism. Just my own little voice" (p. 221). Recalling a stressful period in caring for a dying woman, Sheila felt that "if she looked in the mirror [she] would see Jesus Christ" (p. 235).

The religious individualism reflected in Western culture is also reflected in western psychology. Psychologists have generally defined religion as an individual phenomenon. The primary religious force for William James (1902) was personal emotional experience. Social and institutional religious experiences were relegated to secondary status and excluded from his text. With some important exceptions, other psychol-

ogists have also tended to see social expressions as poorly developed forms of religion or roadblocks to individual growth. Allport (1954), for example, initially labeled mature and immature forms of religion as interiorized and institutionalized orientations, respectively. Similarly, in developmental models of religiousness, social forms of religion have been defined as "psychologically primitive" and personal forms of religion, autonomous from religious institutions, have been defined as most advanced (Meadow & Kahoe, 1984).

Individualism in religious study has taken a different form in recent years. The term "religion" is being used by scholars in an increasingly narrow sense; its meaning is restricted to institutionally based dogma, rituals, and traditions. In contrast, the term "spiritual" is reserved for an inner, more personal process. Although it is a "fuzzy" concept (cf. Spilka, 1993), spirituality is generally described as a highly individualized search for the sense of connectedness with a transcendent force (e.g., Emblen, 1992; Legere, 1984). Comparisons of religion and spirituality are not made dispassionately. The preference of many writers for a personal spirituality over an organized religion is clear. For example, one author asserts "we must free the soul from organized religion and give it back in all its passion and fullness to the men and women of our time" (Elkins, 1995, p. 83).

This anti-institutional bias is unfortunate for two reasons. First of all, the distinction between spirituality-as-good and religion-as-bad does not stand up well to empirical scrutiny. There are many counterexamples. We will see in a later chapter that not all personal–spiritual expressions are helpful and not all institutional–religious expressions are harmful.

Second, the tension between the individual and the institutional can be overdrawn. Wulff (1997) notes that virtually every element of the "new spirituality" is familiar to traditional organized religions. He goes on to observe that much of the language commonly associated with the "spiritual" (e.g., journey, yearning, doubt, authority, rebirth, maturity) is just as applicable to the "religious." Lay people themselves do not generally appear to have trouble integrating the individual and institutional aspects of religious and spiritual life. In a recent study of diverse groups (e.g., mental health professionals, New Age church members, hospice nurses, nursing home residents, conservative and mainline Christians), Zinnbauer and colleagues asked the participants to select one of four options that best describes them: spiritual and religious, spiritual and not religious, religious and not spiritual, or neither spiritual nor religious (Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cowell, Rye, & Scott, 1996). Seventy-four percent of the participants labeled themselves spiritual *and* religious. Signs of tension between the individual and the institutional were not

apparent for the clear majority of this sample. (Interestingly, the subsample of mental health professionals were more likely to label themselves "spiritual and not religious" than almost all of the other groups; another indication perhaps of an institutional religious alienation among mental health professionals, an attitude that sets them apart from those they serve).

A smaller proportion of our sample (19%) did label themselves "spiritual and not religious." However, even though this group was less involved than others in congregation-based beliefs and practices, they were more likely than others to participate in nontraditional group activities, such as meditation, healing, or yoga groups. In a similar vein, over 400 new spiritual associations have developed in just the late 1980s (see Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 1996).

Clearly, a number of people are searching for significance outside of traditional institutions. Far from searching alone, however, they are coming together to form new groups, groups that are supportive of individualized, subjective, and nontraditional experiences related to the sacred. Although it is easy to overlook, the individualization of religious experience is occurring within a social context that encourages a privatization of faith (Berger, 1967). Religion continues to be experienced and expressed not only intrapersonally, but interpersonally as well, by dyads, families, groups, congregations, communities, and cultures.

In this book, I have chosen to rely on the term "religion" in its broadest sense to encompass personal and social, traditional and nontraditional, and helpful and harmful forms of the religious search. When speaking about religion in its institutional sense, I will refer to religious organizations, denominations, and traditions. The term "spirituality" will be used to describe the central function of religion—the search for the sacred. Spirituality and religion are not polar opposites or competitors from this perspective. They are, instead, intimately connected.

Many Shapes, Many Sizes

The ways of emotion, cognition, behavior, and relationship are not independent of each other. They come together to form different kinds of religious pathways. It is somewhat misleading then to speak of religion as *a* way of feeling, thinking, acting, and relating. There are a variety of religious pathways, too many to consider here. But we can examine some of the features that make them so distinctive.

First, religious paths vary in their *connectedness to the sacred.* Through the practice of prayer, the individual attempts to experience the divine directly. Protestant historian Friedrich Heiler (1932) defined

prayer in its essence as a "living communion of man with God, bringing man into direct touch with God into a personal relation with Him" (p. 362). Other religious practices, however, center around symbols and rituals that link the individual to God. In similar fashion, religious feelings may be attached directly to the deity, as in Otto's *mysterium tremendum,* or to the beliefs, rituals, practices, symbols, and communities built *around* God. Reading a passage from the Bible, seeking spiritual counseling, genuflecting before an altar, caring for the homeless, visiting a shrine, chanting a mantra—each of these experiences may be one step removed from God, but each can take on a sacred connotation by virtue of its divine associations. And each has the potential to elicit a wide range of feelings, from sorrow, hatred, and fear to surprise, joy, and compassion.

Second, religious paths vary in their *importance and embeddedness in peoples' lives.* Religion can become an overarching way of life, one that connects the sacred to the daily episodes of living, the past to the present, the present to the future, and the person asleep to the person awake (Wuthnow, 1976). Religion can also be restricted to particular points of transition, times of the year, or situations. It may focus on "only the things that seem orderly or pleasant: lovely woods, vales with sheep grazing, but not storms at sea or a forest fire" or "birth, marriage, childbearing, and death, but not the events in between" (Pruyser, 1968, pp. 77–78).

Third, religious paths vary in *the way they are formed.* Brown (1987) concludes his book on the psychology of religious belief by noting that in one sense people seem "to create their own religion and in another they react to what is made available to them" (p. 218). For some, religion grows out of active searching and questioning. Practices are designed and redesigned, old congregations are left behind and new congregations joined, and beliefs are tested and reformed in the laboratory of life experience. For others, religious beliefs, rituals, and affiliations are passively accepted, handed down from generation to generation like other values, traditions, and assumptions about the world.

Fourth, religious paths vary in *the way they are held.* For some, religious rituals and conceptions, once formed, become more a way of *knowing* the world than *thinking about* the world. This is the point Geertz (1966) makes when he describes religious beliefs as "really real," so completely convincing that they become an unquestioned frame of reference that precedes and structures experience rather than follows it. For others, however, religion is not as compelling. It is held more loosely and uncertainly. Consider the ambivalence voiced by an articulate adolescent from Nicaragua:

> [I] sometimes doubt whether God really exists or cares. I don't understand why he lets little children in Third World countries die of starvation, of diseases that could have been cured if they would have had the right medicines or doctors. I believe in God and I love him, but sometimes I just don't see the connection between loving God and a suffering hurting world. Why doesn't he help us—if he truly loves us. It seems like he just doesn't care. Does he? (Kooistra, 1990, pp. 86, 88)

Although we may be capturing this adolescent in the midst of religious change, questions and uncertainty can become enduring hallmarks of religion (Batson et al., 1993).

Finally, religious paths vary in their *content.* We could illustrate this point through the strikingly different religious conceptions and practices of the world. But in a culture as religiously diverse as ours, most of us have some appreciation for the fact that the sacred is viewed and worshipped in many ways. On the other hand, few of us are aware of the rich and varied forms of social life to be found in religious systems. Because we rarely step outside of our own religious communities (apart from the brief excursion into another congregation for a wedding, confirmation, or funeral), we may fail to appreciate that religious congregations adopt as many different personalities as individuals do. Some congregations develop complex hierarchical bureaucratic structures that would rival those of the government. Others are simple and communal. Some congregations set themselves apart from the larger community. Others are more a part of the larger society, supporting secular institutions and tolerating different religious perspectives. Some congregations encourage members to share their deepest problems with their fellow members. In other congregations, personal problems are kept to oneself or shared in a private meeting with the pastor. What congregation a person belongs to does make a difference for the mental health, personality, and religiousness of the members (Maton & Rappaport, 1984; Pargament, Tyler, & Steele, 1979a; Pargament, Echemendia, et al., 1987; Pargament, Silverman, Johnson, Echemendia, & Snyder, 1983).

Religious paths come in many shapes and sizes. Having stressed their differences, though, it may be easy to lose sight of what these diverse religious pathways have in common.

Pathways as Functional Mechanisms

All religious pathways are methods of seeking significance. The thoughts, actions, relationships and feelings that make up these pathways are

purposeful mechanisms for achieving valued ends. Let us consider a few examples.

The seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church offer a way to connect the person to the spiritual realm throughout the lifespan. Each sacrament serves a specific end tailored to the evolving needs of the individual.

> Through baptism we are spiritually reborn; through confirmation we grow in grace and are strengthened in faith. Having been regenerated and strengthened, we are sustained by the divine food of the eucharist. But if we become sick in soul through sin, we are healed spiritually through penance, and healed spiritually as well as physically, in proportion as it benefits with soul, through extreme unction. Through orders the Church is governed and grows spiritually, while through marriage it grows physically. (Denzinger, 1957, cited by Oden, 1983, p. 112)

Relationships are another set of mechanisms in the search for significance. Take the example of pastoral counseling. Although the process may lead in many directions, it is the relationship between the individual and the pastor and between the individual and God that is often central to change. Christian counselor David Carlson (1988) illustrates this point. Building on a biblical story, he asks his clients to imagine that Jesus has come to their house for lunch and that they have the following experience: "You are amazed at how gentle the voice sounds and his face looks. . . . You take this opportunity to tell Jesus how lonely and guilty you feel. He listens and offers encouragement to face who you are and what you have done that makes you feel that way. . . . Jesus, God's son, offers you his love and forgiveness" (p. 208). The purpose in Carlson's story is clear. He is encouraging his clients to experience Jesus Christ as a nurturant, forgiving parent.

Religious feelings, too, can serve as means toward significant ends. Eighteenth-century theologian and preacher Jonathan Edwards does his best to induce fear in his famous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God": "The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked" (Faust & Johnson, 1935, p. 164). Once again, there is purpose in the use of religious feeling here. By bringing God's presence frighteningly close to the members, Jonathan Edwards tries to move them to Christian life. Even the *mysterium tremendum* of Otto, this *sine qua non* of religious experience, can serve important purposes. Heschel (1986) writes: "Awe enables us to perceive in the world intimations of the divine, to sense in small things the beginning of infinite

significance, to sense the ultimate in the common and the simple; to feel in the rush of the passing the stillness of the eternal" (p. 135).

These are only a few of the many ways in which religion reaches out to the significant in life. Other ways religion conserves and transforms significance in times of stress will be detailed later in the book.

Some Final Thoughts about Religious Pathways

The metaphor of a pathway is almost universal in the world's religions. There are many different kinds of paths and ways to approach them. While some people will never take a religious road, others will cross one at different points in time. Still others will never leave it. Some people will follow a religious course that rarely intersects with other paths, while the religious journey of others will converge with other paths in life. The paths themselves are far from uniform. Neither are they necessarily straightforward. Made up of feelings, thoughts, actions, and relations that combine in many different ways, religious paths are multidimensional and diverse. Many of them are well established, providing identifiable markers for people to follow. Nevertheless, some people prefer to branch off the more heavily traveled trails and go their own way individually or collectively. This process is not easy. It takes time to build religious paths. They grow out of a dynamic meeting of individual, situational, and larger social forces. Diverse as they are, all religious pathways are functional, designed to reach significance, to hold on to it once it is found, and to discover new forms of significance when old ones are lost. But as we will see later, some paths are better designed than others; thus, it is necessary not only to describe and understand religious paths, but to evaluate them as well.

Important as the religious pathways are, they are not the full story. The search for significance in ways related to the sacred involves not only pathways but destinations. In fact, destinations are built into religious pathways. After all, every path must lead somewhere. As yet, however, we have only alluded to some of these destinations. An exploration of the religious labyrinth would not be complete without a discussion of the ends people seek through religion.

RELIGIOUS ENDS: DESTINATIONS OF SIGNIFICANCE

When we talk about significance, we speak the language of value, worth, and motivation. Religious communities throughout the world are well versed in this vocabulary. Every organized religious system provides its

members with its own words to describe the ultimate ends of life. In spite of their differences, however, all of the world's great religions describe the sacred as their common end point. Call it a spiritual presence, Nirvana, everlasting paradise, the Kingdom of God, or eternal life, the spiritual realm lies at the heart of the search for significance in the world's religions. Those who hold to these teachings look to the sacred for significance in life. As Johnson (1959) wrote: "It is the ultimate Thou whom the religious person seeks most of all" (p. 70). Developing, maintaining, and fostering the relationship of the individual to the sacred is the essence of religious life.

The Place of the Human, The Place of the Spiritual

If that were all there were to it, then we could stop here. But religions have as much to do with people as they do gods. Where do human aspirations fit in this schema? Psychologists give one answer to this question, and the religions of the world give another. From the traditional psychological point of view, spiritual pursuits are not what they appear to be; the search for the sacred is, in reality, a reflection of more basic psychological and social motives. "Communion with God," Leuba (1912) wrote in one of the first texts in the psychology of religion, "is a way of dismissing the worrying complications of this world, of escaping a dreaded sense of isolation, of entering into a circle of solacing and elevating thoughts and feelings, of forgetting and of surmounting evil" (p. 8). There are, from this psychological perspective, no unique religious motives, only religious means for gratifying *human* needs. At its very heart then, religion is a matter of psychology.

To the religious mind, this kind of analysis is wrong, plain and simple. In the effort to decipher religion, the social scientist has neglected or distorted what is the essence of the religious world. By shaping religious phenomena to fit beneath a secular umbrella, the most important element of religion—the spiritual—has been left out in the rain. Bloom (1987) makes the same point more cuttingly: "These sociologists who talk so facilely about the sacred are like a man who keeps a toothless old circus lion around the house in order to experience the thrills of the jungle" (p. 216).

The religions of the world give a different answer to the question of the place of the sacred and the profane. Building on the firm belief that the sacred is real and that spiritual desire is a motive that can be reduced to no other, the world's faiths insist the search for the sacred takes priority over temporal concerns. The word "Islam" means submission to the will of God, and "Muslim" means one who submits. Hindus and Buddhists are encouraged to look beyond physical desires, psychol-

ogical want, and worldly goods and to find the transcendent. The covenant of the Jewish people with God is founded on His primacy, a point firmly established in the first prohibition of the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3). The ultimate priorities in living are made just as clear in the Gospels. Salvation is won not through oneself, others, or matters of this world but through Jesus Christ.

We have two very different answers to the same question. Traditional psychology says the religious quest is illusory; spirituality is actually an expression of more fundamental psychosocial motives and desires. The religious tradition argues back that psychology has replaced the transcendent with the self and, in this sense, elevated the human to the level of the gods. Not only is the sacred real, the religious tradition counters, it must also precede the profane as the directing force in life. Small wonder that psychological and religious worlds can find themselves at such loggerheads.

Fortunately, there are grounds for reconciliation within each tradition. On the psychological side, a few empirical studies have begun to provide a rationale for treating spirituality as a motivation in its own right. Factor analytic studies have identified spirituality as a distinctive motivation. For example, Gorlow and Schroeder (1968) identified eight types of religiously motivated people: Humble Servants, Self-Improvers, Family-Guidance Seekers, Moralists, God Seekers, Socially Oriented Servants, and Intellectuals. Welch and Barrish (1982) found that these different types of motivation were also associated with a distinctive set of religious and nonreligious behaviors. Other studies suggest that spiritual motivation is not inconsistent with other psychological and social purposes. In the Project on Religion and Coping, we presented our participants with a number of possible significant ends they might seek through religion, such as spirituality, meaning, self-esteem, comfort, and intimacy (Pargament, Ensing, et al. 1990). Scores on the spiritual purpose scale were correlated with scores for each of the other purposes. Our sample did not appear to have difficulty integrating the spirit with the flesh. The search for God seemed quite compatible with the search for other personal and social ends.

On the religious side, most faiths offer a way to reconcile the spiritual with the human. According to many traditions, humankind contains a spark of the divine. God resides in the hearts of all beings as the innermost Self, it is said in Hinduism. People are precious, it is said in the Western tradition, because they have been made in God's image, and since human needs and aspirations are an inherent part of the divine creation, they too are worthwhile. From this vantage point there is nothing contradictory about the sacred and the profane. Caring for

oneself, justice, love, altruism, meaning, and self-actualization—each of these very human goals can become "spiritualized" through its association with the sacred.

Thus, within many religious traditions, there is nothing inherently wrong with human desires or contradictory about human and spiritual ends. In fact, the two can be difficult to disentangle. Muhammad says: "He who honours the learned, honours me" (Gaer, 1958, p. 238). In Christ's Sermon on the Mount, we hear: "Blessed are the peacemakers; they shall be called God's children" (Matthew 5:9). In the Book of Psalms, the search for God is interwoven with the attempt to satisfy the most basic of human longings. Deep-felt expressions of love and thanksgiving for the Lord are accompanied by pleas for wisdom, for forgiveness, and for comfort and safety.

The sacred, the ultimate end of the world's major religions, is not disconnected from the workings of the world. Most religious traditions are fundamentally concerned about earthly matters, especially humankind, for there is something of the divine in humanity. And just as the advance of the spiritual kingdom advances humankind, the advance of humanity can advance the spiritual kingdom. Human desires, needs, and values of many sorts then can become spiritually significant. Once they do, they take on a different meaning: "The religious man," Viktor Frankl (1986) writes, experiences life "not simply as a task, but as a mission" (p. xv).

We conclude then that there is room for both spiritual and human destinations in the religious search for significance. It is true that the sacred can be sought to the exclusion of the profane. It is just as true that the profane can be sought to the exclusion of the sacred. But the two can be pursued together as well. As we consider some of the psychological and social ends people seek through religion, we will see that the search for personal and social enrichment is not necessarily inconsistent with the search for God.

The Variety of Personal and Social Ends of Religion

William James (1902) was a strong believer in the multiplicity of religious motives. He asked:

> Ought all men to have the same religion? Ought they to approve the same fruits and follow the same leadings? Are they so like in their inner needs that, for hard and soft, for proud and humble, for strenuous and lazy, for healthy-minded and despairing, exactly the same religious incentives are required? Or are different functions in the organism of humanity allotted to different types of man, so that

> some may really be the better for a religion of consolation and reassurance, whilst others are better for one of terror and reproof? It might conceivably be so. . . . (pp. 326–327)

Although James had a tremendous impact on the scientific study of religion, the notion that different people seek different things from religion remains surprisingly radical. Typically, theorists in this area have identified a few monolithic functions of religion that they assume to be true for all people (Paden, 1988). In fact, how the ends of religion are conceived is oftentimes one of the most definitive characteristics of the theory.

There is a problem, however, in positing singular, universal religious ends: Religious phenomena of all sorts must be twisted to fit within one particular mold. We run less risk of distorting religious experience if we make a different assumption—that religion serves different purposes for different people. Consider, for example, the responses of our participants in the Project on Religion and Coping to the questions we asked them about the ends they sought from religion. The average scores on the religious purpose scales are shown in Figure 3.1. As can be seen, people looked to religion for more than one thing in life. They did not focus solely on the spiritual purpose. Neither did they look exclusively to any particular personal or social end. Of course, we can raise serious questions about how accurately people are able to identify and report on their own religious motivations. But if there is any merit to these self-reports, then they suggest that there is no single universal religious end.

A comprehensive review of the many possible ends of religion would go well beyond the scope of this book. Having already defined the centrality of the spiritual end of religion, I will now briefly describe some of the significant personal and social destinations commonly, but not universally, associated with religion.

Religion and the Search for Meaning

From the earliest of times, people have tried to find orderliness, beauty, and reason in the world (Boorstin, 1983). The ancient Egyptians visualized the earth as an egg, protected at night by the moon. The ancient Peruvians described the world as a square with a ridge-like roof inhabited by God. The early inhabitants of India believed the earth rested on four elephants standing atop the shell of a great tortoise. Today we see the world in very different ways, but most of us continue to assume that the universe is in fact ordered and intelligible.

The religions of the world share this assumption. Though their

visions differ, every tradition depicts a meaningful world and encourages its members to find and live by this meaning. Much of classic religious literature takes the form of a dialogue between the divine and a seeker of meaning, the perplexed individual who wonders why there is evil, pain, and inequity in the world and how one should live amidst so much confusion.

Many people look to religion for meaning. In one study, more than 2,000 people were asked why they were religious. The most common answer was that "religion gives meaning to life" (Braden, cited in Clark, 1958, p. 79). Other researchers have also found that religious involvement is associated with a greater sense of purpose in life (see Paloutzian, 1981) and a belief that the world is just (Rubin & Peplau, 1975; Sorrentino & Hardy, 1974).[1] The number and popularity of books written in the past decade with titles such as "Where Is God When It Hurts," "When Bad

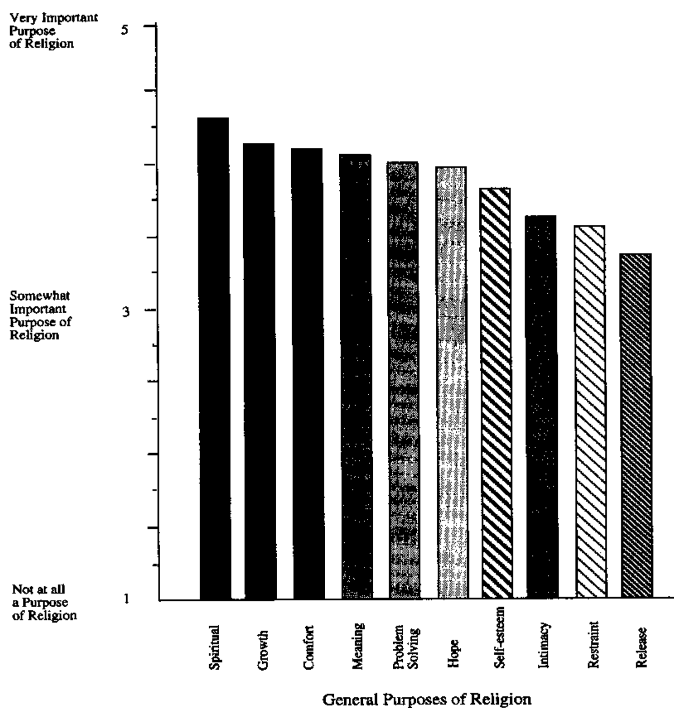

FIGURE 3.1. What people say they look for from religion.

Things Happen to Good People," and "Why Me, Why Anyone" also suggest that many people turn to religion for meaning.

Geertz (1966) believes meaning giving is the most essential function of religion. In his classic paper, entitled "Religion as a Cultural System," he said a minimal definition of religion would not be a belief in God, but a belief that God is not mad. People of different cultures may be able to deal with many conditions in living, but they cannot deal with the uninterpretable—the woman who suffers the deaths of her mother, father, and children or the withdrawal of God from humanity as the result of a small offense. Religions of all kinds ensure that these problems of bafflement, suffering, and injustice are not ultimately incomprehensible. "The effort is not to deny the undeniable—that there are unexplained events, that life hurts, or that rain falls upon the just—but to deny that there are inexplicable events, that life is unendurable, and that justice is a mirage" (pp. 23–24). In essence, religion offers meaning in life.

Religion and the Search for Comfort

Freedom from worry, protection from pain, relief from guilt and self-doubt, reassurance that life will not push the individual beyond the point of endurance—to many minds, these are the primary purposes of religion. This was Sigmund Freud's view. He believed religion offered two kinds of comfort: a protection from the dangers of the world and a protection from the dangers of human impulse itself.

A Shelter from the World

Freud (1927/1961) maintained that people turn to religion, albeit unconsciously, out of a sense of helplessness. Cataclysm, storm, disease, and death mock human efforts at control. Without the gods, people are left to fend for themselves against these superior powers. But with the gods, they can take comfort.

Freud (1927/1961) asserted that religious beliefs and practices provide some respite from tension and anxiety. The outpouring of emotion at a religious gathering, the repetition of behavior in the religious ritual, and the explanation of the workings of the universe within religious dogma all serve to cushion the individual from life's pain and uncertainty. In this sense, he accords a limited value to religion. But, as is well known, Freud felt religion is ultimately a childish, wrong-headed solution to the problems of living; he preferred that people face their state of helplessness head on through an "education to reality" (Freud, 1927/1961, p. 63).

Obviously, organized religions do not share this view. Indeed, they encourage their members to seek and find protection and comfort from

the world through their faith. In one early content analysis of about 3,000 Protestant hymns, Young (1926) found that the majority of hymns dealt with one of two motifs. Thirty-three percent focused on the return to a loving, protective God, as we hear in the following hymn:

> Leaning on the everlasting arms,
> Leaning, leaning,
> Safe and secure from all alarms;
> Leaning, leaning,
> Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Twenty-five percent of the hymns reflected the comforts and rewards the individual would experience in the world to come.

A Shelter from Human Impulse

Freud (1927/1961) went one step further, asserting that people look to religion for protection not only from the terrors and cruelty of nature, but from human impulse itself. There are, he held, destructive instincts in everyone. Uncontrolled, these drives pose a threat to the survival of civilization. Unrestrained, these drives also threaten to overwhelm the individual with guilt and worry. The religions, Freud believed, curb the human appetite and, in the process, defend against the social dangers and anxiety rooted in the unmitigated expression of instinct.

That religion encourages people to moderate their impulses seems beyond dispute. As noted earlier in this chapter, the major faiths of the world will not abide self-indulgence. It is, for instance, the theme common to each of the Seven Deadly Sins—pride, envy, wrath, sloth, covetousness, gluttony, and lechery. However, religions generally find fault with human needs not for the psychological and social reasons proposed by Freud, but because, when overindulged, they separate the individual from God. Listen to this admonition about anger in its extreme, taken from the *Zohar,* the Jewish Book of Splendor: "One, who in his ire cares nothing for the welfare of his soul, uprooting it and letting it be replaced by the impure domination, such a man is a rebel against his Lord . . . he tears and uproots his soul in his heedless rage, and allows a 'strange god' to usurp its place within him" (Schimmel, 1980, p. 262). The religions will not tolerate idolatry. There can be no barrier between the individual and God, not even human need. By keeping instinct in its place, God remains in His.

Empirical studies have also tied religious involvement to indicators of impulse control, such as lower rates of premarital and extramarital sexual activity, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide (see Payne, Bergin,

Bielema, & Jenkins, 1992, for review). Of course, we can only infer from these studies that people seek restraint and relief from their own impulses through religion. Religious involvement could be motivated by the desire for closeness with people rather than the desire for self-control; the improvements in mental health that follow could simply be an unintended but desirable consequence. Or perhaps people seek *both* closeness and comfort. Motivations do not have to be simple or clean. Here we are only suggesting that the search for comfort is one end of religion.

Whether this is the whole story, however, is another question. Religions are far from happily-ever-after storybooks. Fearsome images of hell, vengeance, and slaughter seem to be as plentiful in the religious literatures of the East and West as soothing ones (see Camporessi, 1991). Geertz (1966) puts it this way: "Over its career religion has probably disturbed men as much as it has cheered them; forced them into a head-on, unblinking confrontation of the fact that they are born to trouble as often as it has enabled them to avoid such a confrontation" (p. 18). And empirical studies have found, in some instances, religiousness to be associated with heightened guilt, anxiety, and distress (see Pressman, Lyons, Larson, & Gartner, 1992; Spilka, Hood, & Gorsuch, 1985). In short, while religious involvement can be consoling, it can also raise disquieting questions and demands of its own. The person who looks to religion solely for comfort may go away disappointed.

Religion and the Search for Self

Although religions spurn the arrogance that comes with exclusive self-preoccupation and exaggerated self-opinion, they still see something of the divine within the self. Some important implications follow for the individual:

> He owes himself self-respect, a dignity of thought and action befitting one in whom burns a spark of God.
>
> And he is under the duty to express his individuality. For bearing the divine image, he bears it uniquely. . . . Therefore he is obliged to discover and develop his uniqueness. Otherwise, to all eternity some aspect of the divine nature shall have been left latent and unfulfilled. (Steinberg, 1975, p. 70)

To find oneself, to respect oneself, and to strengthen and actualize oneself, from this perspective, become religious ends.

These ends are apparent in Erich Fromm's (1950) description of humanistic religion, a religious form he contrasts favorably to authoritarian religion. The latter, Fromm said, represents an indulgence in

dependency, a projection of the best of ourselves onto God at the expense of the strengths we do have. To appreciate one's limitations is one thing, but to demean ourselves and worship the powers we rely on is another. Humanistic religion makes no such demand: "Man's aim in humanistic religion is to achieve the greatest strength, not the greatest powerlessness; virtue is self-realization, not obedience" (p. 37). Fromm finds elements of humanistic religion (and authoritarian religion as well) within many of the world's faiths: the Buddhist precept that knowledge and understanding must grow out of personal experience; the teaching of Jesus that "the kingdom of God is within you"; and the Jewish biblical tradition of human autonomy and divine accountability.

Some writers feel that Fromm has made a religion out of the self. I do not read him that way. Fromm is not dismissing God here; he simply assigns the divine a different role. God represents an ideal, a vision of what people should strive for in living. In this sense, the self to be realized in humanistic religion is a self intimate with God.

If people involve religion in their search for self, then (to the extent they are successful), we should also find signs of a tie between the two. This is a tricky area of study, however, for the major religions encourage a particular kind of self-development, a self connected to the divine, not a self devoted solely to its own glorification. Watson and his colleagues (Watson, Hood, Morris, & Hall, 1985) have suggested that the equivocal and, at times, negative relationships between religiousness and indices of self-esteem and self-actualization may be due to an antireligious bias embedded in the measures of self-functioning. For example, several of the items in the Personal Orientation Inventory, a widely used measure of self-actualization, are antireligious in nature (e.g., "People need not always repent their wrongdoings"; "I am not orthodoxly religious"). Others depict an impulsive, happy-go-lucky person, unfettered by social standards. Not surprisingly, when measured in this fashion, self-actualization is incompatible with religious commitment. However, Watson et al. (1985) find that a different picture emerges when less religiously biased measures of self-functioning are used or when the antireligious dimension is statistically controlled. Then the relationship between self-functioning and religious commitment becomes more positive.

Similarly, when we asked people in the Project on Religion and Coping what they seek from religion, many were not hesitant to say they look to religion for their own development. In fact, the search for personal growth through religion was endorsed by church members to a greater degree than any other end, with the exception of the spiritual purpose. I think it is safe to conclude that self-development is another religious end for many people, but remember that this is often a particular kind of self, a self oriented to the sacred.

It is important to add that the search for self does not take place in

isolation. Identity, Erik Erikson (1980) noted, is both a psychological and a social phenomenon: "It connotes both a persistent sameness with oneself . . . and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others" (p. 109). People look to religious groups in part to help "constitute themselves" (cf. Bellah et al., 1985). From the earliest moments in life when the newborn receives a name through religious ceremony to life's latter phases when old roles have been relinquished, religious groups offer opportunities for self-definition and development.

Merely the act of affiliating with a religious group says something important about how people are likely to see themselves and how others are likely to see them. Consider the diverse images and associations members of different religious groups can bring to mind: the conservative Christian, the New Age devotee, the Mormon, the orthodox Jew, the mainline Protestant, the devout Muslim. Identity is defined in part by the groups we belong to. The large majority of people in the United States and Canada affiliate with a religious group (Bibby, 1987; Gallup & Castelli, 1989). Of course, for many people this identification is less than total. Picking and choosing selectively from the teachings and practices of a faith is increasingly commonplace. But religion can be relevant even to those who remain unaffiliated, for what people stand *against* says as much about identity as what they stand for. The social religious context is, in this "anti-sense," critical to the development and maintenance of the identities of the atheist, the spiritual person who rejects organized religious involvement, and the religious woman who is, in most respects, conservative, but takes issue with the church's stand on abortion.

Religious groups provide more than labels for self-definition. Every religious tradition represents a "community of memory" (cf. Bellah et al., 1985) that helps its members find themselves in time and place. Through the stories of the tradition, people learn about who and where they come from. They hear the accounts of exemplary individual and fallen figures who model the way life should and should not be lived. Embedded in the stories and rituals of every religious faith are general templates for living, maps that allow people to locate who they are, who they are not, and how they can best express their distinct identities.

Thus, the search for self through religion should not be seen as a solitary pursuit. Bellah et al. (1985) make the point eloquently: "We find ourselves not independently of other people and institutions but through them. We never get to the bottom of our selves on our own. We discover who we are face to face and side by side with others" (p. 84).

Religion and the Search for Physical Health

People look to religion for physical health as well as psychological and emotional well-being. Prayers for a rapid recovery from illness are

nothing out of the ordinary in the religious services of most faiths. In one survey of Protestants and Roman Catholics, 79% indicated that they had asked God to restore someone to health; this was the second most common of all prayers (Stark & Glock, 1970). In other parts of the world, thousands of people have taken religious pilgrimages in the search for healing at sites where miraculous cures are believed to have taken place, such as Lourdes, France, and Tiruchendut, India. Traditionally, people have looked as much to religion in their search for health as they have to medicine.

Religions, new and old, have designed their own roles and structures to facilitate this search. Long before the development of medicine as we know it, shamans were calling on spiritual powers to treat the sick and dying and to protect their communities from illness. Alternative forms of religious healing such as shamanism are not a thing of the past. They remain popular in many parts of the world, including the United States, where interest in faith healing, New Age therapies, and transcendental meditation is high (see McGuire, 1988). Religious roles and structures are also well integrated into the traditional system of health care, as illustrated by the presence of religiously based hospitals, hospital chaplains, and religious orders dedicated to serving the sick within many communities. The role of the physician itself can be vested with spiritual significance. "Value the services of a doctor for he has his place assigned him by the Lord" is a verse from the deuterocanonical Book of Ecclesiasticus (38:1) that many physicians might enjoy posting in their waiting rooms. Finally, as we will see later in the book, organized religions are able to draw on a variety of coping methods to help the sick and frail understand and come to terms with their conditions.

Religious traditions are interested in more than the alleviation of pain and suffering. They promote healthy lifestyles among their members: Mormons are told to stay away from alcohol and caffeine; Jews are instructed to avoid nonkosher foods; Seventh-Day Adventists are taught to be vegetarian; Parsis are directed toward late marriage and strict monogamy (see Levin & Vanderpool, 1989). And there is some evidence that religious groups are successful in their health-promoting efforts. Commitment to religious beliefs and practices has been positively associated with a variety of subjective and objective measures of health status for people affiliated with a broad spectrum of religious groups (see Levin, 1994; Matthews, Larson, & Barry, 1993).

Of course, these positive effects are not necessarily the result of an active search for health through religion. Better physical health could be simply a by-product of other religious goals and processes. Perhaps it is an outgrowth of the individual's attempt to gain social support or behavioral control through a religious group. Perhaps the search for

spiritual connectedness, emotional comfort, meaning, or a sense of control has some healthy fringe benefits, such as physiological relaxation (cf. Benson, 1984) or potentially immunosuppression-countering effects (Achterberg, 1985; McIntosh & Spilka, 1990). Or perhaps better health is the result of some combination of factors (Hill & Butter, 1995; McFadden & Levin, 1996).

In any case, there is nothing illegitimate about the search for physical health from the perspective of most religious traditions. It is important to add, however, that this understanding of physical health cannot be separated from broader spiritual concerns. Physical health, as religions view it, is one part of a greater spiritual well-being: Christians are told that their bodies are vessels that contain the spirit of God and, as such, deserve glorification; many eastern religions speak of the unity of body and mind; and healing is defined by alternative religious groups as a process of becoming closer to God. In these ways, the search for physical health becomes more than the pursuit of bodily comfort. Like many seemingly worldly objects of significance, physical health can take on sacred value.

Religion and the Search for Community

For sociologist Emile Durkheim (1915) religions are, at heart, a social rather than a psychological, emotional, or physical matter. They provide a representation of society and of the members' relationships to it. Most importantly, Durkheim maintained, religious beliefs and rituals of all kinds unite the adherents into a common faith. "If religion has given birth to all that is essential in society," he said, "it is because the idea of society is the soul of religion" (pp. 432–433).

It is not difficult to find evidence of Durkheim's unifying function among the faiths of today. Where we find religions, we find temples, mosques, synagogues, meeting houses, pagodas, and churches. In 1991, there were over 350,000 religious congregations in the United States (Jacquet & Jones, 1991). These are the homes of people drawn together by something they hold in common—a heritage, a set of beliefs, a dream for the future, or a distinctive way of life. Within their spiritual communities, people can seek out a sense of intimacy and belongingness. They can also express their desire to make the world a better place.

Intimacy

It seems that many people look to religion in their yearning for closeness. Over the past 15 years, my students and I have provided a program of assessment and consultation to a variety of congregations—Protestant,

Catholic, and Jewish (Pargament et al., 1991). While our findings vary from system to system, one of the recurrent themes has been that members are seeking greater intimacy with other members. Many have established their own families away from the communities and families they grew up in. Caught up in activities that keep them apart from each other, they look to the synagogue or church to reestablish that larger sense of connectedness. Without this sense of closeness, many members feel that something vital in religious life is missing. As the member of one such congregation put it: "Ours is a friendly place," he said. "But I joined here for something more than friendliness. It was familiness I missed and wanted."

There is evidence that religious involvement can, at least in some instances, allay feelings of loneliness and disconnectedness (e.g., Ellison & George, 1994; Johnson & Mullins, 1989; Kennell, 1988). For example, psychologist Joseph Kennell (1988) conducted a 3-year case study of a small church in one of the most depressed, socially fragmented parts of the inner city. Members of the church, he found, had larger social support networks than people not affiliated with an area church. Moreover, the support within the church appeared to be less contingent on the skills and resources of the individual. Among nonmembers, social support was associated with greater interpersonal skill. In contrast, social support was unrelated to interpersonal skill among church members. Even marginal people within the church received the social benefits of church involvement. Over his years of observation, Kennell also noted improvements in the relationships among members, particularly among members of the same family. The church, he concluded, had been quite successful in fostering an oasis of belonging in the midst of an impoverished setting. Of course, the church provided more than simply intimacy to its members; it was also a source of concrete help, comfort, growth, and spirituality. But the feeling of belonging was one of the significant ends many of the members sought and attained. Appropriately enough, the congregation was called the Community Church.

The ties forged between people of like faith are a central part of spiritual life. However, some would take issue with Durkheim's view that the gods exist only to unify their members into a coherent group. From the religious vantage point, the gods are not a way to intimacy; intimacy is both a way to God and a way of God. Philosopher Martin Buber (1970) spoke most eloquently of this process. In his classic book *I and Thou*, Buber located God in relationships. Here Buber referred to a particular kind of interaction, not one between an isolated individual and a discrete object, an I and an It, but rather one involving a vital encounter between two subjects, an I and a Thou who meet and complete

each other. Buber wrote: "Man lives in the spirit when he is able to respond to his Thou. He is able to do that when he enters this relation with his whole being. It is solely by virtue of his power to relate that man is able to live in the spirit" (p. 89). In any relationship, Buber asserted—be it with nature, people, or spiritual beings—one can encounter God, the "eternal Thou." However, Buber accorded special significance to relationships with people: "The relation to a human being is the proper metaphor for the relation to God—as genuine address here is accorded a genuine answer" (p. 151).

A Better World

The search for community does not end with a feeling of connectedness to other people. When extended beyond the immediate family, the sense of spiritual kinship may be accompanied by a desire to give to others, to make the world a better place (Batson, 1990). It is this love for others, this concern for a better world, that is a culminating value of most religious traditions. Humanity, they say, is called to share divine blessings with others. Almost every tradition espouses some form of the Golden Rule that, in one way or another, people must care for the well-being of others just as we care for ourselves because God cares for us all. From these religious perspectives, the search for a better world is less of a social value than it is a religious imperative.

When we turn to the exact vision of this better world, we find more differences in points of view. Some see the better world in a radically changed social order liberated from the social ills of our day, such as poverty, discrimination, violence, and the destruction of the environment (Maton & Pargament, 1987). Others see evangelism as the key to the better order. "Win men to Christ," they say, "and injustice and suffering will automatically disappear" (Glock, Ringer, & Babbie, 1967, p. 206). Perhaps most often, the better world is defined in terms of greater compassion and caring among people. Here the focus shifts from radical social change and proselyting activities to social service. It should be added that some people choose to embrace larger worlds than others. The injunction to love thy neighbor has been interpreted to read "love thy like-minded neighbor." It is a sad commentary that the kindness and caring so characteristic of relationships within many religious communities can be paralleled by darker expressions of derision and hostility to those who live outside the boundaries of these narrowly defined religious worlds.

To what extent are people religiously motivated by the desire for a better world? At the institutional level, the evidence of religious giving

is indisputable. Churches and synagogues provide more than twice the social philanthropy of foundations and corporations (Jacquet, 1986). Of all the predictors to charitable causes, attendance at weekly religious services is the strongest (*Giving and Volunteering in the United States,* 1988). At the individual level, it is also clear that people who are religiously committed see themselves as contributors to a better world; they describe themselves as more empathic (Watson, Hood, Morris, & Hall, 1984), espouse more prosocial values (Tate & Miller, 1971), and report greater helpfulness to others (see Batson et al., 1993 for review). Whether religious people actually *behave* more compassionately, though, is an unsettled question (Spilka et al., 1985). This is quite an involved literature, too involved to review here; but the general picture that appears to be emerging is that different forms of religion are associated in varying ways with different kinds of helping behavior (see Batson et al., 1989; Bernt, 1989).

Of course, helping activities, religious or otherwise, may be motivated by forces other than altruistic ones. Hundreds of years ago, Maimonides pointed out in his Golden Ladder of Charity that not all acts of charity are equally praiseworthy. The charity of the lower rungs grows out of the desire for personal and social reward; the charity of the higher rungs finds its value in the act of giving itself. Experimental research by Daniel Batson and his colleagues (Batson et al., 1989; Batson & Flory, 1990) also suggests that religious giving is not necessarily based on altruistic motives. Some seemingly selfless religious devotees, they find, are guided not by the desire to help others, but by the desire to see themselves or be seen by others as caring, loving, and compassionate. Other religiously minded individuals may express a more genuine commitment to a better world.

What can we safely say, then, about religion and the search for a better world? History, case study, and empirical investigations seem to suggest that the better world is a destination of religious value for some, but not for all.

Some Final Thoughts about Religious Destinations

When theorists and researchers turn their eyes to religion, they often see very different things. This point holds particularly true when it comes to the underlying purposes of religion. One theorist speaks the language of meaning, another of comfort. Still others talk about religion as rooted in the search for intimacy, self, or a better world. It is not that they ignore other concepts; rather, each attaches a different primacy to them. Theorist X's overarching religious destination is secondary to Theorist Y. What is the central religious theme to Theorist

Y is simply a means to a greater end to Theorist Z. I have not felt compelled to pick among X, Y, or Z here. Instead I have assumed that theorists find diverse purposes in religious life because there are, in fact, diverse purposes in religious life. And different people look to religion for different ends. The extraordinary staying power of the world's religions may have much to do with the fact people of different temperament, need, and situation can find one of many niches for themselves in these living systems.

In this section, some of the ends common to many of these religions have been reviewed. The selection of religious destinations—spiritual, meaning, comfort, self, physical health, intimacy, and a better world—was somewhat arbitrary; virtually any end, good or bad, could become sanctified through its association with the sacred. But, no matter how they are defined and organized, it is a mistake to reduce one significant end to another. The search for meaning, intimacy, self, and a better world are not simply disguises for what all people really seek—personal comfort. The search for closeness with God is something other than the desire for personal and social satisfaction in masquerade. Only by twisting and distorting the character of religious significance can we reduce it to a single expression.

RELIGIOUS ORIENTATIONS TO THE MEANS AND ENDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

We have explored some of the diverse pathways and destinations within the religious labyrinth. Although we have considered them separately, religious means and ends are not isolated from each other. They come together to form comprehensive orientations to life.

There are many possible routes to many possible end points, so many, in fact, that the systematic study of religion may appear to be an impossible task. Fortunately, this is not the case. Religious pathways and destinations are limited in number and kind by the realities of the world and the human condition. There are situations in life few of us can avoid—birth, coming of age, illness, accident, and death. Neither can most of us avoid the basic existential questions these crises and transitions raise. All of these constraining forces make it possible to identify a smaller number of well-trodden paths and aspirations in the religious labyrinth.

The notion of religious orientations helps simplify a potentially overwhelming task. They capture, in efficient form, some of the common pathways people take and destinations they seek through religion. I would define religious orientations as *general dispositions to use particular means to attain particular ends in living.* The religious nature of the

orientation comes from the involvement of the sacred in the configuration of means and ends. The term "general" is used to underscore the point that religious orientations do not speak to the particulars of any situation. They are cross-situational phenomena; that is, they describe general tendencies or inclinations to use certain religious means and seek certain religious ends over many situations.

This definition is quite different from other views of religious orientation. Although an exceptionally large portion of current research in the field has been devoted to studies of the relationship between various religious orientations and phenomena such as prejudice, helping behavior, personality, and mental health (see Gorsuch, 1984), the meaning of this concept itself has been cloudy. Religious orientation has been viewed variously as a personality variable, a motivational construct, an attitudinal dimension, or a cognitive style (see Hunt & King, 1971; Kirkpatrick & Hood, 1990, for reviews).

I believe the picture becomes clearer if we assume that religious orientations are, in fact, multidimensional. They are, in part, motivational constructs. They have to do with the ends people generally hope to reach. But they are also cognitive, behavioral, attitudinal, emotional, and relational constructs. They describe the religious pathways people generally follow toward their goals.

Thinking about religious orientations as means and ends is also a departure from the religious and psychological literature that has polarized these two constructs.

The Polarization of the Means and Ends of Religion

The terms "means" and "ends" are often used interchangeably with the "bad" and "good" of religion. The idea that religion can serve as a means to an end brings to mind some unsavory images: the sanctimonious church member who jealously protects his position in the congregation to maintain his self-esteem and status in the community; the political leader who invokes the name of God to support a war that extends his power at the expense of his followers' lives.

These "users" of religion have been contrasted unfavorably with those who look to religion as an end in itself. Compare these two writings from a Talmudic treatise, *The Wisdom of the Fathers* (Goldin, 1957), and its commentaries:

> He who makes use of the crown of Torah, is forever puffing himself up and lording it over people, and demands to be honored by virtue of the crown of Torah, which he can show he has acquired, will perish and be driven out of the world. (p. 68)

> He who studies the Torah for its own sake merits many things; not only that, but he is worth the whole world, all of it. He is called beloved friend; he loves God, he loves mankind, he is a joy to God and a joy to man. (p. 226)

Psychologists have portrayed utilitarian approaches to religion in similarly unflattering terms. This point is illustrated most sharply in the seminal work of Gordon Allport (1954), who was interested in the seemingly paradoxical relationship between religion and bigotry toward blacks and Jews. Why, he asked, do the creeds of the world's great religions emphasize the brotherhood of all people while their practices all-too-often produce just the opposite effect? How is it, for instance, that one minister in war-torn Europe martyrs himself to protect the Jews in his village while another wraps his anti-Semitism in the cloak of religion? Throughout his career, Allport devoted a significant amount of thought to this question. Not all religions are alike, he concluded. The religion of brotherhood and compassion must be distinguished from the religion of prejudice and bigotry. Early in this line of work, Allport (1950) developed a richly detailed conception of religion at its best, the religion of maturity, and religion at its most pathological, the religion of immaturity. Later, however, Allport moved to a simpler, more narrow conception of these kinds of religion. He offered two "ideal types" of religious orientation lying on the ends of a continuum spanning the good and the bad of religion (Allport & Ross, 1967).

On the negative end is the extrinsic religious orientation:

> A person with an extrinsic religious orientation is using his religious views to provide security, comfort, status, or social support for himself—religion is not a value in its own right, it serves other needs, and it is a purely utilitarian formation. Now prejudice too is a "useful" formation: it too provides security, comfort, status, and social support. A life that is dependent on the support of extrinsic religion is likely to be dependent on the supports of prejudice. . . . (p. 441)

On the positive end is the intrinsic religious orientation:

> Contrariwise, the intrinsic religious orientation is not an instrumental device. It is not a mere mode of conformity, nor a crutch, nor a tranquilizer, nor a bid for status. All needs are subordinated to an overarching religious commitment. In internalizing the total creed of his religion the individual necessarily internalizes its values of humility, compassion, and love of neighbor. In such a life (where religion is an intrinsic and dominant value) there is no place for rejection, contempt, or condescension toward one's fellow man. (p. 441)

Allport contrasted a religion of means—a device, an instrument, a tool—with a religion of ends—lived, internalized, totally directive. This polarization of means and ends lies at the heart of the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic religion: "Perhaps the briefest way to characterize the two poles of subjective religion," Allport said, is "that the extrinsically motivated person *uses* his religion, whereas the intrinsically motivated *lives* his religion" (Allport & Ross, 1967, p. 434). Allport's is not an idiosyncratic position among psychologists. For example, in a reformulation and elaboration on his work, Batson et al. (1993) relabeled the extrinsic dimension "Religion as Means" and the intrinsic dimension "Religion as End." Allport's conceptualization of the intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations and Batson's reformulation remain the most heavily used framework for psychological studies of religion (Gorsuch, 1984).

It is unfortunate that the means and ends of religion have been cast as archenemies, for every search, religious or otherwise, must necessarily involve both means and ends. Even when religion is sought for its own sake, a way must be found to reach this goal. Indeed, as we have seen, the religions of the world prescribe not only the ultimate ends of life, but pathways to these ends. Through prayer the individual seeks God. Through education, children learn about their religious tradition. Through good deeds, a person lives consistently with God's laws. All of the world's great religions recognize that some method, some instrument, or some way toward these ends is a necessary part of religious life. They find nothing reprehensible about the fact that religion is used, when it is used to reach spiritual goals. In fact, they prescribe instrumental means to attain intrinsic ends (Johnson, 1959). There is, in this sense, nothing inconsistent about both "living" and "using" religion.

If we take a close look at the instrumental kind of religious experience that has been so heavily disparaged, we find that the criticisms have more to do with the *misuse* of religion rather than the use of religion per se. To condemn all religious uses because of some religious misuses, however, is a matter of guilt by association. The critical question is not whether religion is lived or used—most people who define themselves as religious, in some way or another, use religion; instead we have to ask, *how* is religion used in living and to what ends?

The following sections explore the distinctive means and ends associated with the three most commonly studied religious orientations: the intrinsic and extrinsic orientations of Allport and the quest orientation of Batson.

A Means-and-Ends Analysis of Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Quest Orientations

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Orientations

Although Allport characterized the intrinsic and extrinsic orientations as religions of ends and means respectively, ends and means are a part of both orientations. They are, however, ends and means of a very different kind (see Table 3.1). With respect to ends, Allport said, the intrinsically oriented find their most basic motive in religion (Allport & Ross, 1967). What is this master motive? It centers around God rather than the self. As an illustration, he drew on the words of a clergyman who described the intrinsically oriented as those who "come to church to thank God, to acknowledge His glory, and to ask His guidance" (p. 434). Personal needs may be strong, Allport said, but they are ultimately less important. This is not to say that Allport's spiritual ends are devoid of personal and social significance. While faith is of the highest value to the intrinsic, it is a faith "oriented towards a unification of being" and one which "takes seriously the commandment of brotherhood" (Allport, 1966, p. 455). In this way, Allport appeared to sanctify two of the personal destinations we described earlier: the search for self and the search for a better world. The search for meaning may have been spiritualized as well; one item on the intrinsic religiousness scale developed by Allport and Ross (1967) reads: "Religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life" (p. 441).

A different set of personal ends was singled out for criticism in Allport's extrinsic religious orientation. Over the years, he tied the

TABLE 3.1. Religious Orientations as Means and Ends of Significance

	Religious Orientation		
	Intrinsic	Extrinsic	Quest
Means	Highly embedded in life Guide for living Convincing	Peripheral Lightly held Passively accepted Compartmentalized Sporadic	Active struggle Open to question Flexible Complex Differentiated
Ends	Spiritual Unification Compassion Unselfish	Safety Comfort Status Sociability Self-justification Self-gain at others' expense	Meaning Truth Self-development Compassion

extrinsic orientation to a variety of personal and social needs, including solace, safety, status and sociability. Implicit in much of his writing was a belief in the antisocial nature of these ends. In 1960 Allport wrote: "Extrinsic religion is a self-serving utilitarian, self-protective form of religious outlook, which provides the believer with comfort and salvation at the expense of outgroups" (p. 257).

In short, Allport set up a clear contrast of ends. The intrinsically oriented individual seeks God, faith, a better world, and unification in living. "Self-serving" needs are transcended. The extrinsically oriented individual seeks personal gain in the forms of comfort, esteem, and sociability, even at the expense of others. Spiritual ends of religion are not a part of this equation.

The two orientations differ in means as well as ends. The religion of the intrinsically oriented, Allport said, is fully embedded in life, informing and guiding the person's thoughts, actions, and feelings. In contrast, the religion of the extrinsically oriented is only "lightly held," a peripheral part of life, passively accepted and used as a crutch only when personal need arises.

The polarization of extrinsic and intrinsic orientations into means and ends has led theorists and researchers to ignore important differences in *kinds* of religious pathways and destinations. A closer analysis of Allport's two orientations, however, makes clear that he was not contrasting a religion of means with a religion of ends. He was contrasting a religion of one set of means and ends with a religion of another.

Quest Orientation

Daniel Batson and his colleagues (Batson et al., 1993) presented a third orientation to religion. This orientation grew out of some dissatisfaction with Allport's work. While they found no fault with Allport's conception and measurement of extrinsic religiousness, they argued that intrinsic religiousness has too much the flavor of a rigid dogmatic approach to faith. As an orientation "embraced" and "followed fully," they said, it leaves little room for several other factors crucial to religious experience: complexity, doubt, and tentativeness. These characteristics form the center of Batson's third orientation: religion as quest, an "open-ended, questioning" approach more interested in the ongoing search for truth than "clear-cut, pat answers" (p. 166). Batson cites Siddhartha Gautama, Mahatma Gandhi, and Malcolm X as exemplars of those who have lived a life of quest.[2]

What are the means associated with this religious orientation? Batson is clear on this point. The quest path is largely a cognitive one; it has to do with the way beliefs are formed and held. "Questions are

far more central to my religious experience than are answers" reads one item from the quest scale (p. 170). "It might be said that I value my religious doubts and uncertainties" reads another (p. 170). Quest, Batson maintains, is a way of thinking that involves a willingness to actively confront and struggle with tough issues; an open, flexible stance to learning; a skeptical and doubting attitude toward simple solutions to difficult problems; and a complex, highly differentiated framework for viewing the world.

Where does the quest orientation lead? The religious quest represents a search for truth, a search for meaning in life: "An individual who approaches religion in this way recognizes that he or she does not know, and probably never will know, the final truth about such matters. Still the questions are deemed important, and however tentative and subject to change, answers are sought" (p. 166).

The search for personal growth and development also receive mention as ends of quest, although Batson et al. (1993) are less explicit on this point. As noted earlier, Batson et al. (1989) have suggested that quest may also be associated with a genuine desire to help others and better the world. However, it is not clear whether altruism is viewed as simply a by-product of a quest orientation or as an end in itself.

Implications of a Means-and-Ends Approach

Explaining Some Puzzling Findings

Thinking about religious orientations in terms of means and ends helps sharpen these concepts. The distinctive nature of each orientation stands out with more clarity. Elsewhere, I have suggested that a "means-and-ends" analysis may improve the measurement of religious orientations and offer one way to make sense of some puzzling empirical findings in the literature (Pargament, 1992). One such puzzle is the lack of correlation between the three religious orientations, orientations that have been viewed as if they were irreconcilable approaches to religion (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991b; Donahue, 1985). Recall that Allport, for one, conceived of intrinsic and extrinsic religiousness as polar opposites in an effort to explain how religion could be associated with the bigotry of anti-Semitism and racism on the one hand and the love and compassion of Jesus on the other. To find that the two scales are generally unrelated (i.e., people who score highly on the intrinsic scale are just as likely to score highly on the extrinsic scale as they are to score low) seemed unfathomable. Allport tried to resolve this puzzle by describing those who endorsed both intrinsic and extrinsic positions as "muddleheads" (Allport, 1966).

Certainly, some people are indiscriminate in their approach to religion; however, I do not think that everyone who endorses the two approaches is confused (Pargament, Brannick, et al., 1987). An individual could, without much muddleheadness, endorse several of the items on the intrinsic and extrinsic scales. After all, what is inconsistent about the extrinsic item "The purpose of prayer is to secure a happy and peaceful life" and the intrinsic item "It is important to me to spend periods of time in private religious thought and meditation?" Part of the problem here may be that Allport's measure of extrinsic religiousness does not carry the full weight of his concept. The items on this scale do not depict an individual selfishly pursuing his or her goals at all costs. Instead, they describe someone who looks to religion primarily for help in satisfying personal and social needs.

In his conception of intrinsic and extrinsic religiousness, Allport forces the individual's hand. You must make a decision, he says. Choose the faith or choose yourself. But are the two necessarily incompatible particularly when the antisocial elements of the extrinsic orientation are removed from the measure? Recall from the Project on Religion and Coping that spiritual religious purposes were positively associated with many other personal and social religious goals: meaning, hope, intimacy, comfort, and esteem, to name a few. In another study (Echemendia & Pargament, 1982), items reflecting the search for personal support, comfort, and solace through religion emerged as a part of the *intrinsic* factor, once again underscoring the point that religious and at least some personal ends are far from inconsistent. A forced-choice between the sacred and the secular overlooks the capacity of religions to spiritualize humanity and humanize God. The lack of correlation among the intrinsic and extrinsic scales then may suggest that many people do not feel a need to choose between themselves and God. Their refusal to conform to a forced-choice logic does not make them all muddleheads. Rather, it suggests that, for some, there is room for both God and self at the center of religious experience.[3]

Are There Only Three Religious Orientations?

There are empirical and theoretical reasons to suspect that there may be more than three religious orientations. Some empirical study indicates that these three orientations oversimplify the intricacies of religious means and ends. Several years ago, Ruben Echemendia and I found that when religious orientations are measured by a more diverse set of questions, a richer picture is revealed (Echemendia & Pargament, 1982). In addition to the intrinsic–personal support factor just noted, our factor analysis revealed three distinct extrinsic factors: Social Support—the

search for a sense of community and fellowship through religious life, Obligation—religious involvement out of a sense of duty or guilt, and Social Gain—the use of religion to raise one's social standing and self-image. Kirkpatrick (1989) reported similar results. His factor analysis of the intrinsic and extrinsic religious scales yielded an intrinsic factor and two extrinsic factors: one dealing with religion as a means to social gain, and the other involving religion as a means to personal comfort and protection. Others have found some signs of multidimensionality within the intrinsic and quest scales as well (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991b; King & Hunt, 1969; Watson, Morris, & Hood, 1989).

Important as studies of intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest orientations are, our theoretical review of the varieties of religious means and ends points to some limitations in these three orientations and encourages us to look beyond them. For instance, none of these orientations speaks to the wide-ranging content of religious beliefs, practices, or feelings. In the process some critical distinctions may be obscured: The believer in a benevolent, loving God is grouped with the believer in a capricious, judging God; the evangelist is not distinguished from the advocate for human rights; and the individual who feels God's presence in his or her life may appear to be the same as the individual who experiences God as only an abstraction.

As notable is the omission of the diverse forms of religious social experience, so central in one way or another to personal religious expression. Although we have spoken of religious orientations as embedded in a social world, they are typically studied as if they exist apart from a larger social context (Barton, 1971). A full accounting of religious orientations must attend to the social dimension of religion as well as the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional. And what about other religious destinations—the desire for physical health, the search for intimacy and connectedness, the yearning for a radically improved world? These are simply a few of the ends that are not an explicit part of the three major orientations to religion. When measured more comprehensively, I suspect we will find that there are more configurations of religious means and ends than we have, as yet, imagined (see Weinborn, 1995).

Religious Disorientation

In this chapter, I have considered many religious means and ends, and some of the ways they come together to form religious orientations. The focus here has been largely descriptive. Yet religious orientations can be evaluated as well as described. I will take up this sensitive, value-laden task later in the book. Here let me simply note that religious orientations are not equally worthwhile. This is not to say that there is one

orientation best for all. But some religious pathways are better constructed than others, some religious destinations are more viable than others, and some pathways are better suited to some destinations than others. At their best, religious orientations offer well-integrated, coherent frameworks for living. At their worst, they are fundamentally disorienting, consisting of religious bits and pieces that leave people lost, confused, and headed toward dead ends.

BEYOND RELIGIOUS ORIENTATIONS

Where do I want to go, and how do I get there? Few questions have more important implications for the general course of our lives. Religion offers answers to both of these questions. Studying the full range of religious orientations to the search for significance represents an important next step for the psychology of religion. It is not, however, the only important step.

Even if we were able to identify religious orientations more sharply, we would still be left with a critical question. How do these religious orientations translate into concrete life situations? Religious orientations are dispositional phenomena, generalized tendencies to use particular religious means and seek particular religious ends. They are abstractions, on the same level as other abstract dispositions such as mental health, personality, and social attitudes. They are also one step removed from particular situations of living. Knowing someone's religious orientation alone tells us relatively little about how it is actually involved in the person' thoughts, actions, and hopes in a specific encounter. This is a key reason why the coping process is so important to the psychological study of religion. It forces us to ask when, why, and how religion comes to life. Only in specific situations can we witness the actual workings of religion. Having explored the first central concept of the book, religion, we turn now to the second, coping.