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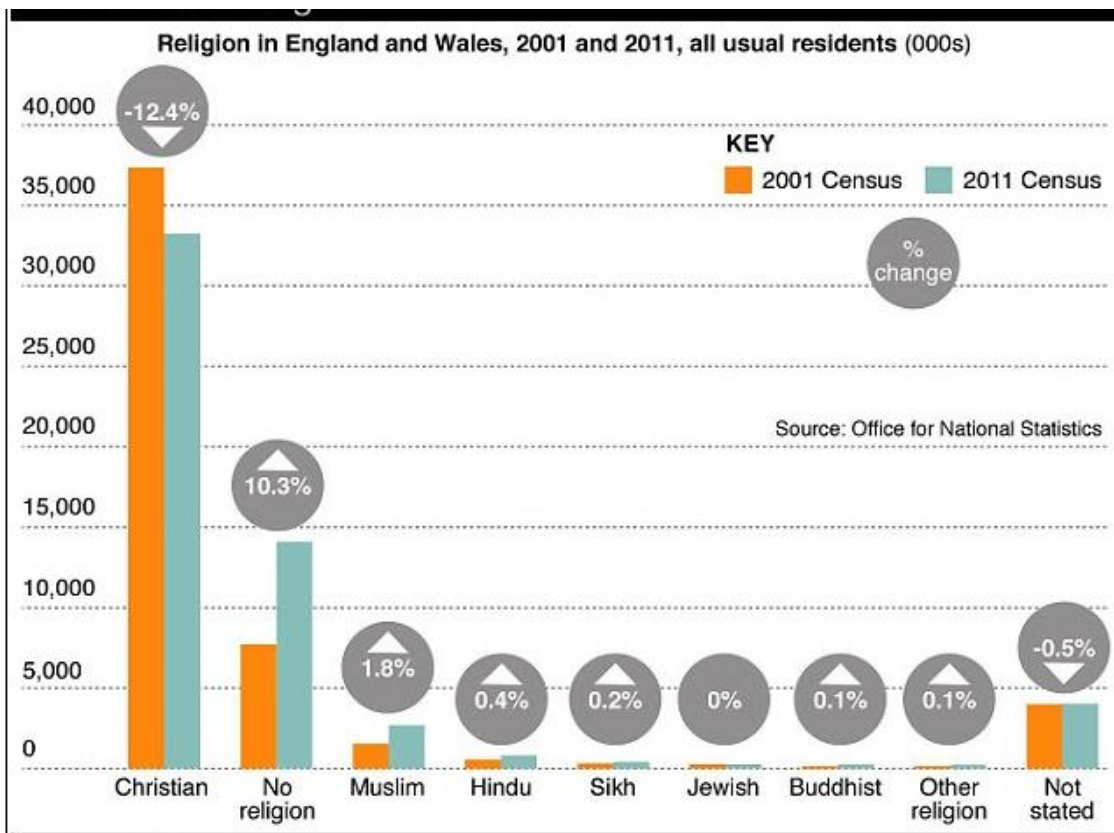


# Beliefs in Society

## Unit Three: SCLY3

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# Course Outline

## The relationship between religious beliefs and social change and stability

- Functionalism: conservative force, inhibition of change, collective conscience, Durkheim and totemism, anomie; civil religions.
- Marxism: religion as ideology, legitimating social inequality, disguising exploitation etc.
- Weber: religion as a force for social change: theodicies, the Protestant ethic.
- Neo-Marxism: religion used by those opposing the ruling class, liberation theology.
- Feminism: religious beliefs supporting patriarchy.
- Fundamentalism: rejecting change by reverting to supposed traditional values and practices.

## Religious organisations, including cults, sects, denominations, churches and New Age movements, and their relationship to religious, spiritual belief and practice

- Typologies of religious organisations: churches, denominations, sects and cults, with examples of each New Religious Movements and typologies of NRMs e.g. world rejecting/ accommodating/ affirming; millenarian beliefs, with examples of each
- New Age movements and spirituality, with examples
- The relationship of these organisations to religious and spiritual belief and practice.

## The relationship between different social groups and religious/spiritual organisations and movements, beliefs and practices

- Reasons why people join NRMs, NAMs and other organisations
- Gender and religion: women: women's greater participation, women in religious.
- Organisations including NRMs; men's participation and organisational roles in religions; sexuality and religion; images of gender in religions.
- Ethnicity and religion: religion and ethnic identity; religion in migrant communities; religions and minority ethnic groups in the UK today.
- Age and religion: religious participation and belief by age group; religious socialisation.
- Social class and religion: religious participation and belief by social class.

## The significance of religion and religiosity in the contemporary world, including the nature and extent of secularisation in a global context

- Globalisation and belief systems, including fundamentalism.
- Postmodernity: end of meta-narratives, 'spiritual shopping'.
- Secularisation: problems of definition and measurement; aspects of secularisation such as disengagement, rationalisation, rise of pluralism/diversity, de-sacralisation, disenchantment, individuation.
- Arguments and evidence for and against secularisation e.g. attendance and membership; believing without belonging; the secularisation cycle theory and compensators (Stark and Bainbridge); UK compared with other countries and global significance of religion today.

## Different theories of ideology, science and religion, including both Christian and non-Christian religious traditions

- Theories of ideology: Marxist, neo-Marxist, pluralist and feminist accounts; hegemony.
- Theories of science: the social construction of knowledge; political, social and economic contexts of science; theory and observation; falsification; paradigms.
- Theories of religion: Functionalist, Marxist, neo-Marxist and feminist.

# Definitions of Religion

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- Difficulties arise in trying to define religion as there is no single definition as to what religion is other than a general agreement that it is a set of **beliefs systems**.
- **Polyani (1958)** argues religion involves any belief system which includes **three** features:
  1. A 'circularity' of ideas –where each idea is explained referring to another. E.g. Mohammed's connection to Abraham in Islam.
  2. Explanations for difficult situations – religion provides answers to issues where reason fails to through 'faith'.
  3. Other belief systems are unacceptable.
- **There are two main approaches used in Sociology to define religion:**
  1. **The Substantive Definition** – concerned with the content of religion.
 

E.g. Weber defines religion as a “belief in a superior supernatural power that is above nature and cannot be explained scientifically”.

Substantive definitions are exclusive as it draws a clear distinction between religious and non-religious beliefs. E.g. Christianity vs. football. To be a religion, a set of beliefs must include belief God or the supernatural.

+ Enables a specific analysis of religion.

- Since this definition remains highly rigid it assumes religion does not change with progress in society and thus assumes secularisation is occurring today.
  2. **The Functional Definition** – defines religion in terms of the function it performs for individuals and society.
 

E.g. Durkheim defines religion in terms of the contribution it makes towards social integration, rather than specific beliefs in god.

Functionalist definitions are inclusive as it allows us to include a wide range of beliefs and practices that perform functions such as integration. E.g. football.

+ Enables cross cultural, historical and fictional comparisons of religion.

- Since almost everything can be regarded as a religion it is difficult to remain focused with this definition.
- Some Sociologists believe religion is a social construction in that it is created by man rather than a supernatural being such as god. For instance Interpretivists believe religion is defined by each individual while Marxists believe religion is created by the bourgeoisie in order to oppress the proletariat; thereby serving the interest of capitalism.

## Useful concepts when attempting to understand beliefs in society

- **Animism or Totemism** – belief that natural phenomena (e.g. trees or stones) are made up of spirits and souls which can affect society.
- **Atheism** – belief that no god or supernatural being exists.
- **Agnosticism** - neither a belief in, nor a denial of, god or other supernatural beliefs. They are prepared to believe if evidence is produced.
- **Monotheism** – belief in ONE god.
- **Polytheism** – belief in MORE than one god.
- **Supernatural** – belief that science and rationality cannot explain all events and experiences.

# Functionalism on Religion

## Intro:

- Functionalism views religion as a **conservative** force.
- They believe religion promote **social harmony, integration** and **solidarity** through the reinforcement of the **value consensus**.
- Functionalists are concerned with analysing the role of religion in meeting the **functional prerequisites** or basic needs of society in order to function. E.g. they believe society can only survive if people share the same beliefs about right and wrong behaviour
- Functionalists also look at the role religion plays for both individuals and society.

## 1. Durkheim

- Durkheim believed that **social order** and **stability** can only exist if people are **integrated** into **society** through **value consensus**. He believed religion helped to achieve this as it provides a set of beliefs and practices which unite people. E.g. attending Church on Sunday.
- He argued that all societies divide the world into the **'sacred'** (special, religious or holy objects, spirits or miracles) and **'profane'** (ordinary everyday objects).
- By studying the practice of **totemism** among **aborigines** in Australia, he argued that totemism represented religion in its most basic form. A totem is **created** and **defined sacred** by society. Thus, "in worshipping the totem, people are in fact worshipping society".
- Religious **beliefs, practices** and **ceremonies**, for Durkheim, act as a form of **social glue** that **binds** people together and builds **bonds** between them; thereby encouraging **collective conscience** which exists outside individual, controlling their behaviour and regulating how members interact with each other. E.g. ethnic groups in the UK use religion as a means to uphold their cultural and identity.
- While religion helps to promote social integration, Durkheim believed that **supernatural dimensions** of religion will eventually **disappear**, and other **civil religions**, like football and celebrities, would take over in performing the same functions.

- **Value consensus** – a widespread agreement around the main values of a society which is the basis of social order.
- **Social solidarity** - refers to the integration of people into society through shared norms and values.
- **Functional prerequisites** – the basic needs that must be met if society is to survive.
- **Totemism** – the practice of worshipping a sacred object or totem.
- **Collective conscience** – a sense of shared identity, commitment, and belonging
- **Civil religion** – sacred qualities that are attached to non-religious aspects of society i.e. celebrities or football.
- **A mechanism of adjustment** – a means of emotional adjustment in the face of crises.
- **Religiosity** – the extent of the importance of religion, religious beliefs and feelings in peoples' lives
- **Secularisation** – the process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance.

## Evaluation of Durkheim's Theory:

- Ignores individual religious experiences, assuming all religious interactions are social.
- He can't explain the fast rise of New Religious Movements in modern day society.
- His study of primitive religions cannot account for modern day complex and diverse forms of religions.
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## 2. Malinowski

- Malinowski also studied tribal societies and believed religion helps to reinforce **social norms** and **values** to promote **social solidarity**.
- He also highlighted the role of religion in dealing with **situations of emotional stress** which **threatened social solidarity**. He believed **TWO** events caused this type of distress:
  1. **'Life crises'** which causes anxiety such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death. He notes that all societies have religious rituals to deal with life crises. E.g. Baptism for new borns in Christianity.
  2. **Actions** and **events** that cannot be controlled or predicted also produce anxiety. E.g. natural disasters. Rituals helped to reduce anxiety by providing hope and a feeling of control. E.g. praying before doing something.
- Thus religion provides **emotional security** and **comfort** which threaten social stability and solidarity in society. **Evidence** for his theory comes from statistics which demonstrates that religiosity increases during war time.

## Evaluation of Malinowski's Theory:

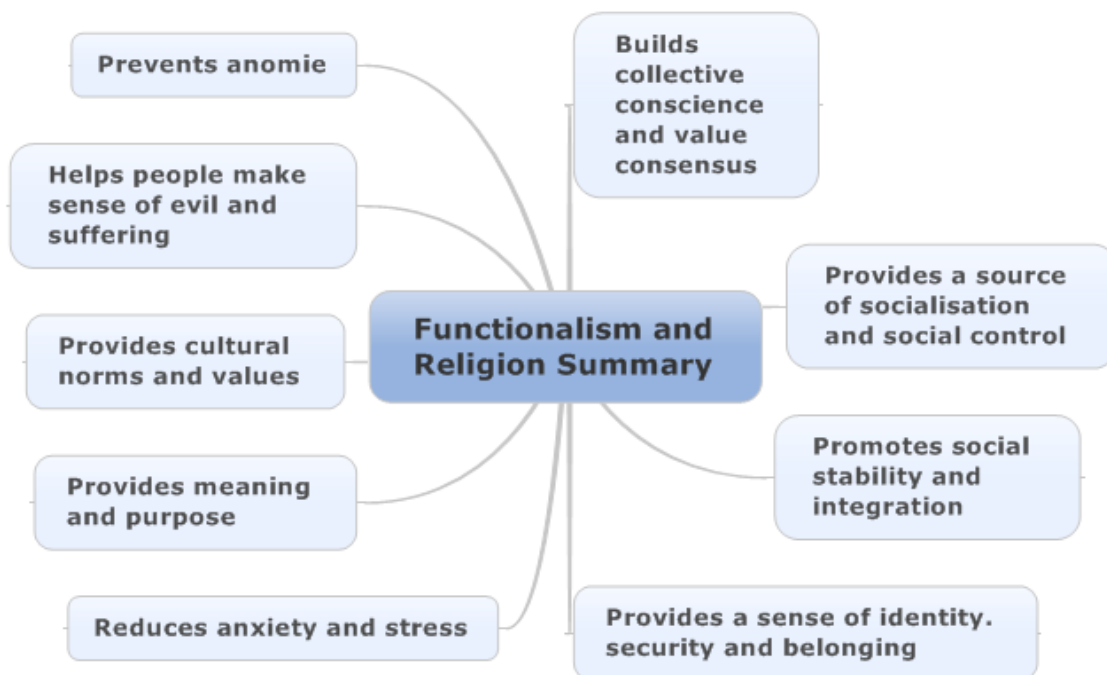
- Exaggerates the importance of religious ritual in helping people to cope with situations of stress and uncertainty. Also ignores individual differences in dealing with stress.
- He can't explain the fast rise of New Religious Movements in modern day society.
- Alcohol, smoking, and comfort eating are more common methods used in modern day society to deal with stress and anxiety.
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### 3. Parsons

- Parsons examined the role of religion in **providing** and **highlighting** the **core values** of any **culture**, and the **social norms** which **regulates** behaviour.
- He believed religion provides '**universal guidelines for human action**'. E.g. The Ten Commandments provide the basis for good and bad behaviour in Christianity.
- Like Malinowski, he also believed religion provides **meaning** and **explanation** to **difficult situations**, thereby enabling people to make sense of otherwise inexplicable life crises which can threaten social stability. He argued that religion provided individuals with a **mechanism of adjustment** in dealing with such issues. E.g. funerals help us to accept and deal with death.

### Evaluation of Parsons Theory:

- Exaggerates the positive contributions of religion, ignoring its dysfunctional aspects. E.g. War on Terror.
- Can't account for multicultural societies, like London, where there is a diverse range of religious guidelines for human action.
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## Evaluation of Functionalism:

Strength	Limitation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Can explain why religion provides more consensus than conflict globally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Many societies exist without a unifying religion. E.g. The UK</li> <li>➤ Functionalism asserts rather than explains how religion reinforced common values, particularly in multicultural societies.</li> <li>➤ Ignores individual religious practices and those without that exist outside religious buildings.</li> <li>➤ Ignores dysfunctional aspects of religion. E.g. conflicts like the War on Terror which is divisive.</li> <li>➤ Functionalism downplays the role of religion in promoting social change.</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>

### Synoptic Link

# Marxism on Religion

## Intro:

- Marxism, like Functionalism, views religion as a **conservative force**. However, while the Functionalists see this positively, Marxists have a negative view of religion.

## Karl Marx

- According to Marx religion is an **illusion** as it is **socially constructed** by the bourgeoisie to serve their own interest in maintaining capitalism. This is achieved through using religion as a tool to oppress the proletariat since inequalities are presented as God-given and therefore seen to be legit and inevitable. E.g. the 'divine right of kings'. Inequalities between the rich and poor therefore cannot be challenged without questioning the authority of god.
- Thus, religion, according to Marx, helps to reproduce the **dominant ideology** of the bourgeoisie by **reinforcing false consciousness**.
- Marx famously defined religion as the **"the opium of the people"**. By this he meant religion, acts like a hallucinatory, pain-relieving drug, creating illusions among the oppressed which helps to maintain the power of the ruling class.

- **Bourgeoisie** – ruling class or owners of the means of production.
- **Proletariat** – working class or workers who sell their labour to the means of production.
- **Alienation** - the process whereby the worker is made to feel foreign to the products of his/her own labour.
- **Dominant ideology** – the ideas or beliefs of the bourgeoisie which are apparent throughout society.
- **False consciousness** – when workers are not aware that they are being oppressed and do not know their revolutionary power.
- **Ideological state apparatus** – are agencies that spread the dominant ideology and justify the power of the dominant social class.
- **Hegemony** – refers to the dominance in society of the ruling class's set of ideas over others, and acceptance of and consent to them by the rest of society.

- Religion, for Marx, **eases** the **pain** of **oppression** in **THREE** ways:
  1. Religion **promises** an **eventual escape** from evil and suffering through the **reward** of the **afterlife**. E.g. Christianity and Islam promise heaven for those who undergo pain.
  2. Religion offers **hope of supernatural intervention** to solve problems on earth. E.g. Jehovah's Witnesses believe God will intervene and destroy the wicked through the battle of Armageddon, and survivors will form a new paradise on earth.
  3. Religion provides an **explanation for inequality**. E.g. Hinduism provides justification for the Indian caste system through the belief of reincarnation.

## Louis Althusser

- Althusser, similarly, saw religion as an **ideological state apparatus**, which helped to spread **hegemony**. It kept the proletariat oppressed by: 1) legitimising social inequality, 2) disguising the true nature of exploitation and 3) keeping the working class passive and submissive.

## Evaluation of Marxism:

Strength	Limitation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Evidence to support Marxism:</li> <li>1) 80% of Church of England bishops are public school or Oxbridge educated.</li> <li>2) Vatican remains one of the wealthiest 'business' globally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ignores those who challenge the ruling class through religion. E.g. fundamentalist Muslims who challenge western rule.</li> <li>➤ Religion has an impact on social groups besides class. Thus, the role of ethnicity, gender, sexuality is ignored.</li> <li>➤ Too deterministic. Assumes the economy controls religion, ignoring its sanctity.</li> <li>➤ Ignores positive aspects of religion. E.g. giving to charity is one of the five pillars of Islam.</li> <li>➤ Marxism downplays the role of religion in promoting social change.</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>

## Synoptic Link

## Functionalism vs. Marxism

Similarities	Differences
Both adopt the view that religion inhibits change and rather acts as a conservative force.	However, while Functionalists view this positively asserting religion promotes social integration and stability; Marxists maintain a negative view, arguing religion serves the interest of capitalism.
Both explain the origins and functions of religion in terms of social factors.	<p>For Functionalists the social factors are to promote social stability, integration and value consensus throughout society.</p> <p>For Marxists the social factors operate with the bourgeois using religion as a tool to oppress the proletariat.</p>
Both see religion as a social construction; with the supernatural having no reality	Durkheim doesn't believe in the sanctity of religion and believes this is not important as long as religion provides unity. This is why he believes civil religion will take over sacred religious beliefs soon enough.
	Functionalists believe religion is necessary and justified, while Marxists believe it is repressive and legitimises ruling class ideology.

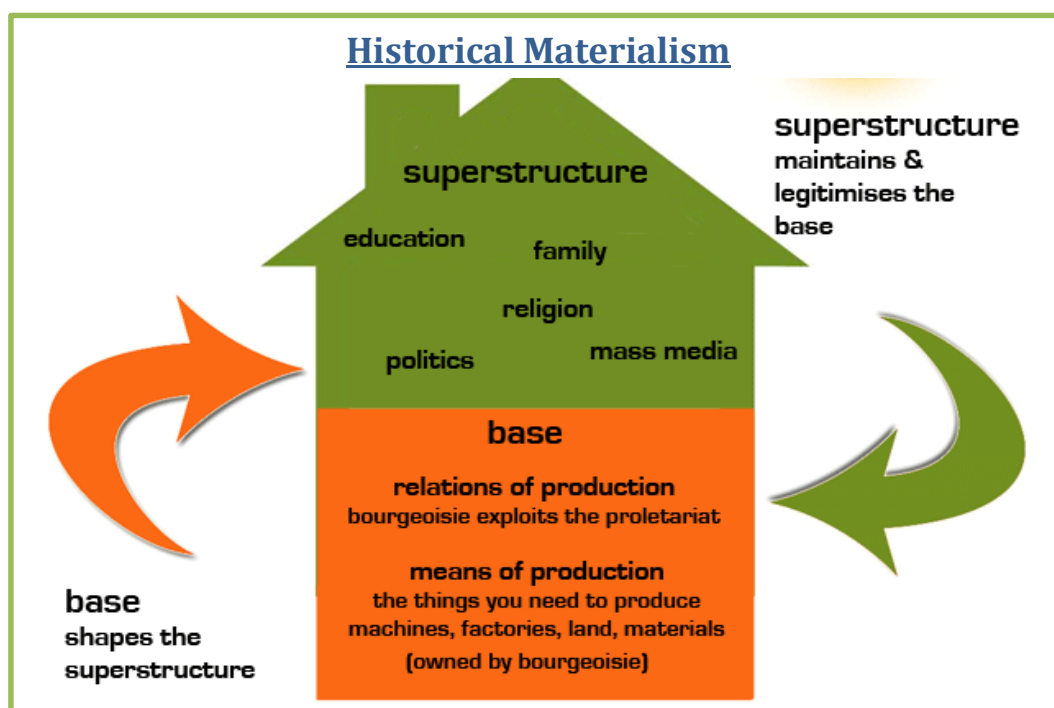
# Neo-Marxism on Religion

## Intro:

- While Functionalists and traditional Marxists both believe religion plays a conservative role in society, **Neo-Marxists** believe it could be used to bring about **social change**. In short, they emphasise the revolutionary potential of religion.

## Neo-Marxists

- Neo-Marxists rejected Marx's **historical materialism** which suggests **superstructures**, like religion, merely reflect society's **economic base**.



- Instead, **Gramsci** developed the theory of **relative autonomy** which suggests that superstructures of society, like religion, have some **independence** from the economy, rather than being directly determined by it.
- Gramsci** argued religious beliefs were **no less real** or **important** than **economic forces** and that **action** must be **guided** by **theoretical ideas**. He noticed the **ideological control** the church exercised over Italians, which he called **hegemony**, and argued **religious beliefs** and **practices** could be used to **fight back bourgeois oppression**.
- Maduro** also argues for the relative autonomy of religion. He asserted that religion is not a functional, reproductive or conservative factor in society but is often used as the **main available channels** to bring about **social change**.

- Maduro believed that in a situation where there is **no other outlet for grievances**, such as Latin America, the **clergy** joined Marxist intellectuals and provide guidance for the oppressed in their struggle against dictatorship.

### Evaluation of Neo-Marxism:

Strength	Limitation
<p>➤ <b>Evidence to support Neo Marxism:</b></p> <p><b>1) Liberation theology</b> – is the fusion of Christianity and Marxism during the 1960s when various radical political groups joined forces with catholic religious leaders to fight back against dictatorship and oppression.</p> <p><b>2) Martin Luther King</b> used Christian values and beliefs to bring about civil rights to black citizens in America.</p> <p><b>3) Gandhi</b> used the values of Hinduism to fight back against British rule in India.</p> <p><b>4) Iranian revolution</b> 1979 against western rule.</p> <p><b>5) The war on terror</b> – Taliban fighting against western domination.</p>	<p>➤</p> <p>➤ Neo-Marxism downplays the role of religion in acting as a conservative force to reproduce the existing status quo. E.g. religion does not change its values frequently or ever.</p> <p>➤</p> <p>➤</p>
<p><b>Synoptic Link</b></p>	

# Interactionism on Religion

## Intro:

- While **Structuralist** or **Macro theories**, like Marxism or Functionalism, view religion as an external force, **Social Action** or **Micro theories**, like Interactionism study the **meanings** and **interpretations** people attach to religion. E.g. the cross in Christians represents the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.
- Interactionism argues that religion is a **social construction**, created by people to understand and make sense of the world. They also believe it acts as a **conservative force** as it helps to maintain social stability in society.

- **Universe of Meaning** – a set of ideas and values about the meaning of life which helps people make sense of and give meaning to the world, and enables them to give life some focus, order and meaning.
- **Theodicy** – an explanation for the contradictions between the existence of god who is assumed to be all powerful and benevolent, and the existence of widespread evil and suffering in the world.

## Berger

- Berger argues religion provides a **universe of meaning**, which gives individuals a sense of meaning and explanation in the face of a chaotic world. Religion also provides a **theodicy** by giving meaning to and helping people make sense of inexplicable and fundamental questions about human existence e.g. the existence of poverty and disease.
- Berger believes religion acts as a **sacred canopy** over society, providing a shield that protects people from uncertainties and meaninglessness by helping them to interpret and make sense of the world and their position in it. Thus, Berger argues by providing a universe of meaning and theodicies, religion is contributes to the maintenance of social stability.
- However, Berger recognises that in modern society religion is losing its role for most people as the provider of a universe of meaning, being **replaced by reason, logic, and science**, thus creating growing **secularisation** and **disenchantment** with the world.

Strength	Limitation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤</li>      <li>➤</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Berger himself argues that religion has lost its scared canopy and no longer provides a source of meaning or morality.</li>     <li>➤</li>     <li>➤</li> </ul>

## Stark and Bainbridge

- Stark and Bainbridge examine the **meaning** and the **functions** religion performs for individuals in society - similar to Functionalism but also Berger.
- They believe religion meets the needs of individuals when their sense of social order is disrupted by economic hardship, loneliness or grief etc. Thus, belief in God, religion and religious organisations provides a means for individuals to make sense of and come to terms with such events as well as answering fundamental questions.
- Religion, subsequently, acts as a **compensator**, providing hope, particularly in regards to life after death.
- According to these two writers religion in some form or another will never disappear, as it provides answers to universal questions and offers general compensators meeting human needs.

Strength	Limitation
➤	➤ Ignores the fast rate in which secularisation is taking place in modern day western societies.
➤	➤

## Evaluation of Interactionism:

Strength	Limitation
➤ Examines the religious experience of people and seeks to understand meaning they attach to it.	➤ Places too much emphasis on the subject meaning of religion, ignoring its impact at an institutional level upon individuals.
➤	➤ Overemphasis the rational thinking people attach to religion ignoring its emotional appeal.
	➤ Ignores wider power structures in society. E.g. who controls religion?

### Synoptic Link



# Max Weber on Religion

## Intro:

- Weber is a **social action** theorist.
- He argues that to understand **human behaviour** it is necessary to examine the **meanings** people give to **events** and **ideas**. Since religion is an important part of peoples world view, he sought to understand how the **evolution** of new religious ideas can stimulate **social** and **economic change**.
- Weber strongly believed that religion is an initiator of **social change** by explaining how **capitalist industrialisation** developed first in Western Europe due to **Protestantism**.

## The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

- Weber studied the rise of **Calvinism** in Europe which is a branch of the **Protestant** aspect of **Christianity**.
- He believed that **Calvinist** ideas and beliefs had an important influence on the **development** of industrial capitalist.
- Weber argued that for capitalism to develop, both the **normative conditions** (values and beliefs) and **material conditions** (factories, technology etc.) were necessary. He believed that 17<sup>th</sup> century **Calvinism** provided the **normative conditions** though the '**protestant work ethic**' which led to the **material conditions** by generating the '**spirit of capitalism**'.
- According to Weber the following features of Calvinism led to the establishment of capitalism:
  1. **Predestination** – belief that their fate has already been decided by God and there is no way of knowing who the **chosen ones** for heaven are. The **solution** is to become involved in '**intense worldly activity**' to prove you are the chosen one.
  2. The Protestant ethic emphasised values and virtues like **hard work**, **saving** and **modesty** and the avoidance of idleness, time wasting, and self-indulgence.
  3. **Hard work** and **material success** were seen as **religious virtues** and a likely **sign** of being one of God's chosen elite.
  4. The protestant ethic also valued the **pursuit of wealth** and thus empathised the virtues of **reinvesting profits** back into the business rather than spending on luxuries and self-indulgent consumption.
- Thus, according to Weber capitalism first developed in Western Europe according to the religious values of Calvinists.

## Evaluation of Max Weber:

<b>Strength</b>	<b>Limitation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Weber provides a cross cultural analysis to social change.</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Can't explain why Calvinist countries like Norway or Sweden did not experience industrialisation at the same time.</li> <li>➤ Weber over stresses the link between religion and economics, ignoring other factors that also played a part.</li> <li>➤ Weber does not demonstrate how strongly individual entrepreneurs held their religious beliefs which could have affected their behaviour.</li> <li>➤</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>
<p><b>Synoptic Link</b></p>	

# Is religion a conservative force or an initiator of social change in society?

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## Conservative force

- Religion helps to **maintain** the existing **status quo**.
- It helps to maintain **social solidarity** and **social stability**.

## Social change

- Religious **beliefs** and **organisations** can help **change** society.

**Is religion a  
conservative force or an  
initiator of social change  
in society?**

# Gender and Feminism on Religion

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## Intro:

- Feminists regard **religion** as a **patriarchal institution** that reflects and perpetuates patriarchal ideology which legitimates female subordination. Thus, they too believe religion is a **conservative force** which helps to uphold patriarchal ideology. **However feminists differ in their view of religion:**
  - 1. Liberal feminists** seek to encourage equality for women within existing religions by aiming to remove obstacles that prevent them from taking on positions of authority such as becoming religious leaders or teachers.
  - 2. Radical feminists** regard most existing religions as existing purely for the benefit of men. Thus they seek to remove religion altogether or change it fundamentally incorporate women too.
  - 3. Marxist feminists** also believe religion acts as 'the opium of the people' but focus on the double oppression of working class women due to their low ranked status as women and working class.
- To understand the connection between gender, feminism and religion we need to examine three areas:
  - 1) Whether religion is patriarchal.
  - 2) Explanations for female oppression within religion.
  - 3) Why women are more religious than men.

## Is religion patriarchal?

### Evaluation of religion as patriarchal

- Not all religious denominations or faiths are patriarchal. E.g. Ancient Greece and Egypt had goddesses and NAMs such as Wicca are women based.
- Aldridge argues gender equality can be found among contemporary groups such as the Quakers.
- Watson believes the veiling of women in Islam can be liberating as women are not treated as sexual objects as they are in Western societies but really judged for who they are.
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## Explanations for Female Oppression in Religion

### 1. Armstrong - The decline of the goddess

- **Prehistoric societies** were characterized by **gods** and **goddesses** and according to Armstrong **women** were seen **closer to nature** due to the **reproductive** function.
- However, she argues **male aggression** from Europe and Middle East brought with it a **patriarchal rationale** in order to justify their control over women. Thus, they brought about the introduction of **Monotheism** (belief in one god) over **polytheism** (belief in more than one god) which eventually led to the death of the goddess.

#### Evaluation of Armstrong:

- Some religions, such as Hinduism, still retain female goddesses.
- NRMs can be more female centered such as Wicca.
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### 2. Davie – Different images of God

- According to Davie, men and women have **different images** of **god** in modern societies. E.g.
  - **Women** view god as **loving, comforting** and **forgiving**.
  - **Men** view god as **powerful** and in **control**.
- Davie also argues women maintain a **subordinate role** in most contemporary religions. E.g.
  - **Christianity** – “wives be subject to your husband, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church”.
  - **Judaism** – “Blessed art thou O Lord our God that I was not born a slave. Blessed art thou O Lord our God that I was not born a woman.”
- According to Davie, even when women appear in religious scriptures, such as Eve and Mary, this is to **justify** and **reinforce** ‘good’ and ‘bad’ female behaviour.

#### Evaluation of Davie:

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### 3. Feminism and religion

- **Daly** argues gender equality will **never** be achieved in the Church so long as **God** is **associated** with **masculinity**. E.g. reference to God as 'he'.
- She asserts that Christianity itself is a '**patriarchal myth**' which is **rooted** in **male 'sado-ritual'** such as the torture cross symbol. This in effect embodies hatred for women.
- **De Beauvoir**, like Marxists, also argues **religion** is **oppressive**.
- However, she believes it is **oppressive** towards **women** as religion is used by **men** (the oppressor) to **control** the **behaviour** of **women** (the oppressed group). For example, the Divine Right of Kings to rule.
- She also argues that **religion** provides women **compensation** for their **second-class status** through beliefs such as heaven and hell.
- **El Sadaawi** **does not agree** that **religion** is **patriarchal**. Rather she blames the **patriarchal cultural domination** of religion which developed with the introduction of **monotheism**. Once in place, it began to **re-shape** and **influence** religion so that it favoured male domination.

#### Evaluation of Feminism and Religion:

- Can't explain why most women willingly choose to believe in religion if it is patriarchal.
- Can't explain why women are more religious than men.
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### 4. Bird - Sexuality and Religion

- According to Bird, women's **bodies** and **sexualities** are thought to be **dangerous** and '**polluting**' in most **mainstream religions** due to **menstruation** and **child birth**. Thus, they are excluded from religious rituals. E.g. women that are on their periods are not allowed to fast during Ramadan in Islam or touch religious objects in Hinduism.
- Bird also argues **widespread importance** is given to **asceticism** which is a form of self-discipline in which **physical pleasure** is **repressed**. E.g. Roman Catholic priests and nuns are expected to be celibate

#### Evaluation of Bird:

- Not all religions or religious interpretations encourage asceticism. E.g. protestant Bishops and Muslim Imams could have a family of their own.
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## 5. Watson – the veiling of women

- Watson examines the **veiling of Islamic women** which is seen by Western writers as an **oppressive** form of **social control**. However, Watson argues that the **veil** can be **liberating** for Muslim women as it **reduces** the **male gaze** and possibility for **sexual harassment**. She argues that Muslim women are not judged according to ‘what they look’ like but rather ‘who they are as individuals’.

### Synoptic link between Watson and the ‘male gaze’ theory in education

#### Evaluation of Watson:

- Assumes all women choose to cover up ignoring oppressive places like Afghanistan and Iran when they are forced to.
- Hijab can itself become a fashion symbol. E.g. the use of logos such as Dior, Gucci etc.

#### Evaluation of Feminist explanations:

Strength	Limitation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Women and men have different natures and thus different roles within religion.</li> <li>➤ Religious recognition for the differences between men and women has been accepted for hundreds of years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Most women accept the different roles given to them and men according to religion.</li> <li>➤ Can’t explain why women are more religious than men.</li> <li>➤ Man religions have a liberal stance in regards to equality. E.g. Gay marriage Act 2013 in the UK followed by the C of E accepting female bishops (2013).</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>

### Synoptic Link



## Why are women more religious than men?

- Despite religion is said to be patriarchal, women still remain more religion than men. Islam is the only exception in which men show greater commitment and involvement than women. On the whole women are more likely to:
  - Express religious faith and get involved in religious rituals and worship.
  - Practice private prayer and join NRMs.

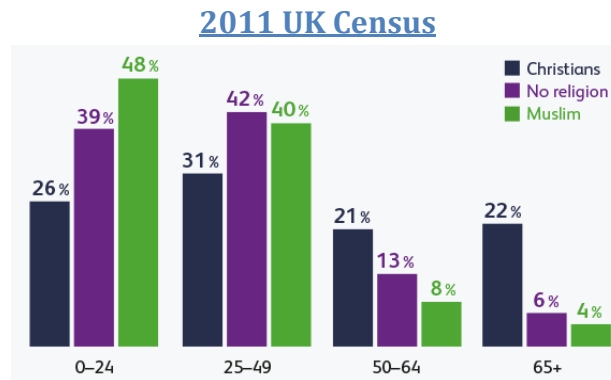
## Explanations for high levels of female religiosity

1. **Visions of God** - According to Davie women view God as loving, comforting and forgiving, while men perceive God as powerful. Thus, women are more likely to turn to God for support and guidance.
2. **Guardians of family life and tradition** – women are expected to teach family values and culture to children. Thus they are more likely to teach religion to their children and subsequently participate.
3. **Status frustration** – women are more likely to experience status frustration due to lack of personal fulfilment or status as a result of being confined to the home. Thus, religious participation, particularly cults or NRMs, can help to provide compensation for their oppression.
4. **Miller and Hoffman identified two reasons:**
  - 1) **Differential socialisation** - due to gender socialisation, females are brought up to be more passive, obedient and nurturing, which can lead to greater involvement in religion as these values are empathised.
  - 2) **Differential roles** – low levels of women participate in paid work than men and thus have more time for church activities. They are also responsible for introducing children to religious practise.
5. **Life, death and changes in life** – women are more likely to be caring. E.g. they are more likely to work in occupations like teaching, nursing and social work. Moreover, their experiences of maternity brings them close to birth and death which are all central issues in religion bringing them closer to spirituality.
6. **Life expectancy** - women have a greater life expectancy than men. Thus, they are more likely to experience death of loved ones which can get them to seek comfort through religion.
7. **Social Deprivation and marginality** - women are more likely to experience poverty, personal or family troubles, low self-esteem and maintain less power in society. Thus they may subsequently turn to religion as a way to cope with their social deprivation.

# Age and Religion

## Intro:

- In general people seem to develop a greater attachment to religion as they grow older. Belief in God is lowest among those under 34, and highest among those over 55.
- Young people are less likely to participate in mainstream religious activity, and more than ½ say they are not religious at all, compared to only 2% of those over 65 who make this claim.
- **Bruce** - the age gap between churchgoers and non-churchgoers has widened in all Christian denominations over the past 25 years, and will continue to increase if current trends continue.



## Older people and Religion

**Three key reasons** which explains the increase of religiosity among the elderly:

### 1. Disengagement

- As people get older, they become detached from the integrating mechanisms of society, such as the workplace.
- Older people may face a growing privatisation of their lives, with increasing social isolation as partners and friends die.
- Participation in religious organisation provides a form of social support, and a network of people to relate to.

### 2. Religious Socialisation

- The old generations in contemporary society are more likely to have had a great emphasis placed on religion through the education system and socialisation in the family when they were younger.
- This may have laid seeds, which flower as they grow older and rediscover a religiosity, which they ignored.

### 3. Ill health and death

- Older people are faced with declining health and death looming on the horizon – the things that religion concerns itself with.
- The aging process and disengagement from society may therefore generate an engagement with religion for comfort, coping, meaning and support.

## Younger people and Religion

- Young people are undoubtedly less religious in terms of their expressed religious belief in surveys and their participation in the mainstream Christian religions.
- Not true among young Muslims, and young people seem more attracted to New Age spirituality and NRMs.
- The vast majority do not participate in either, though this does not mean that they are lacking in spirituality or belief, the way that these are being expressed may just be in a new privatised way which cannot be recorded by surveys

### 1. The declining attraction of religion

- Mainstream religious organisations are very unattractive to most young people – they find services boring, repetitive and old-fashioned, and don't understand the controversy over many issues such as abortion, contraception, and gay rights as they are so different to the values they hold.
- Many young people see mainstream Christianity as “uncool” and stay away

### 2. The expanded spiritual marketplace

- **Roof** – young people may be turning away from the conventional ideas of religion as there is an expanding spiritual marketplace, that promotes the NRM and NAMs that young people are more likely to be exposed to due to their large consumerism of the mass media and the internet.
- **Lynch** – this means that there are now more sources for young people to draw on to build religious and spiritual beliefs, identities and lifestyles, finding expression outside traditional religions and religious organisations

### 3. The privatisation of belief – believing not belonging

- Young people may be choosing to treat their religion as a private matter.
- They may not feel they belong to any particular religion or hold any religious belief.
- They may prefer not to make any public display of whatever they believe through involvement with religious organisations, or admit to them in surveys.
- **Davie** – this is believing without belonging

### 4. Secular spirituality and the sacred

- **Lynch** – though young people may be diverted from religion as normally conceived, they may be finding religious feelings inspired by aspects of what are generally regarded as non-religious or secular life.
- An agreement with **Durkheim's** view of the sacred, as young people become attached to objects, experiences or other things such as celebrities, football or clubbing, these are taking on the form of the 'sacred' in their lives, perhaps causing them to reflect on the meaning of their lives and the way they live them.
- THUS, young people may not have lost all religiosity, but are simply finding new forms, many of which are associated more with the secular and non-religious world than with religious as it is presented and understood by most.

## 5. Secularisation and the decline of metanarratives

- **Lyotard** – metanarratives like religion have lost their power to influence how people think about, interpret, and explain the world. Young people may be becoming less religious because they no longer believe the old religious explanations, and can pick, mix, or reject any beliefs they choose.

## 6. Declining Religious Education

- **Bruce** – The Church of England is increasingly unable to recruit young people by socialising them into religious thinking through Sunday school and RE as Sunday schools are declining, and, while required by law to hold Christian based assemblies, most secondary schools go for more general or personal learning.
- **THUS**, the majority of young people don't get any religious education at all, but this reflects the fact that most of them don't want it.

## 7. Pragmatic Reasons

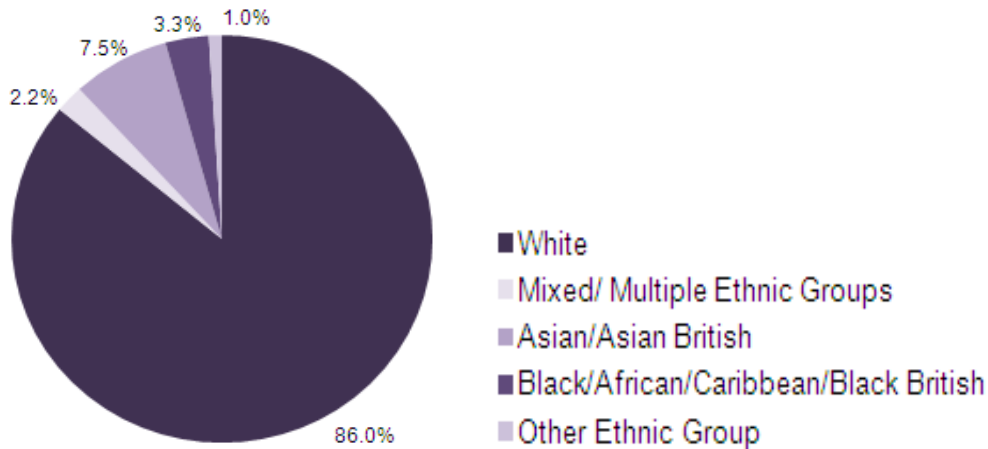
- Leisure is a much bigger part of life: shops and clubs now open for very long hours, and on a Sunday.
- Young people have more demands on their time, and may simply have more interesting and enjoyable things to do.
- It is seen as being “uncool” to be religious in many young peer groups, which exerts social pressure not to be religious – even Tony Blair said that while he was prime minister he has to play down his religious beliefs for fear of being seen as a ‘nutter’.

### Synoptic Link:

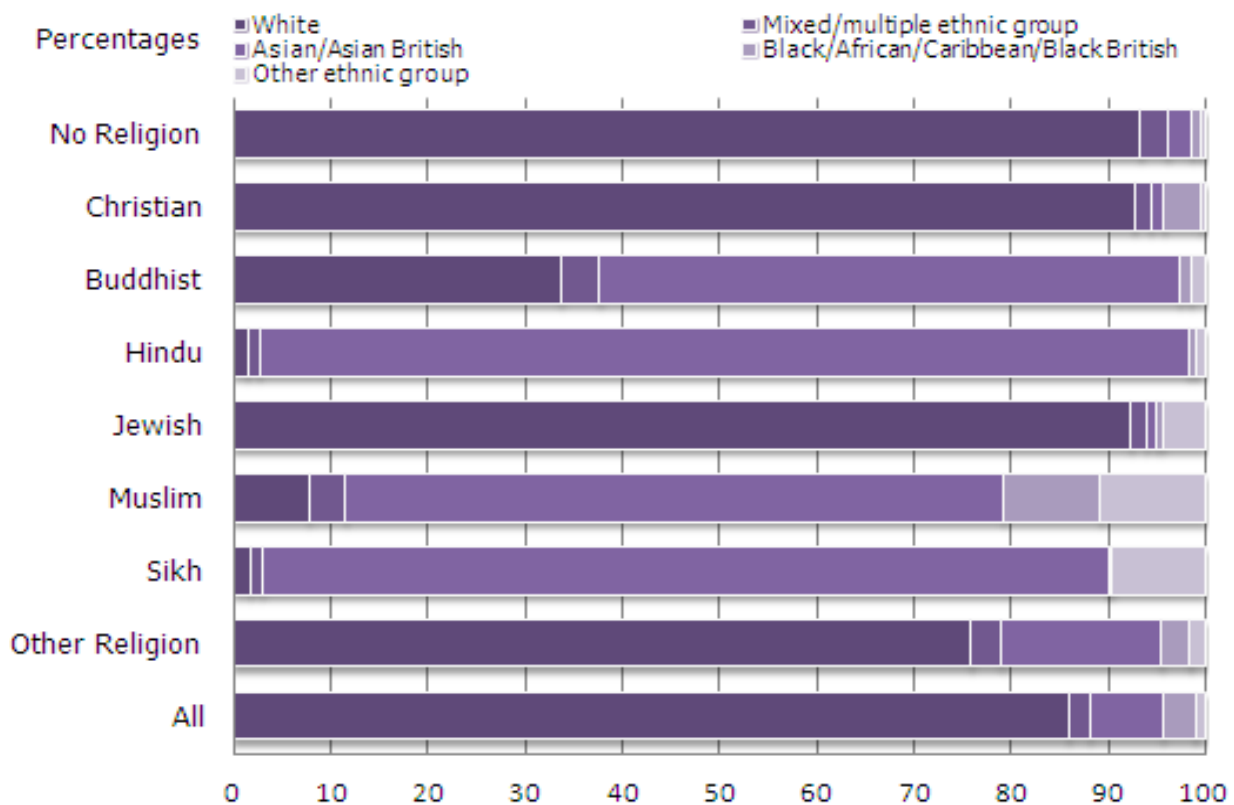
# Ethnicity and Religion

## Intro:

2011 UK Census on Ethnicity



2011 UK Census on Religion and Ethnicity



- In 2011, over 9/10 Christians were White (93%). Within this group White British was the largest group (86%) while 5% identified with White Other.
- Muslims were more ethnically diverse. 2/3 of Muslims (68%) were from an Asian background, including Pakistani (38%) and Bangladeshi (15%). The proportion of Muslims reporting as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British (10%) was similar to those reporting as Other Ethnic Group (11%).
- 93% with no religion were from a white background.
- The majority of Hindus and Sikhs were from an Asian ethnic background (96% and 87%). As with Muslims, Buddhists were also ethnically diverse.

## Different Religions of Ethnic Groups

### 1. African Caribbean's

- Mostly **Christians** who make up about **17%** of Sunday church **attendees** in the UK.
- Most experienced racism in established churches upon arrival to the UK and found the teachings boring and different to what they were used to. Thus, they began to establish own churches based on **Pentecostalism** and **Rastafarianism**.
- **Pentecostalism**
  - Largest Christian group among British Africans and fastest growing among all Christian groups.
  - It places emphasis on experience of God rather than teachings.
  - Religious services are vibrant, family centered and has high entertainment value.
  - Services involve singing, shouting, clapping, dancing, fainting, speaking in tongues etc.
- **Rastafarianism**
  - Common among young male African Caribbean's.
  - Described as a religion or 'way of life'.
  - Involves a distinctive group identity based on the spiritual use of cannabis and dreadlocks.
  - Known widely by reggae music and Bob Marley.
  - Highly patriarchal – belief that women should take on traditional roles (housewives/ mothers) to protect them from racial and sexual harassment by white society. This gives power to men, by discouraging women's engagement and participation in society.
- **Madood** found African Caribbean's found it easier than Asians to assimilate into UK culture as they 1) followed Christianity, 2) religion was a choice, 3) religion was less important in the formation of their ethnic identity.

### 2. Asian religious groups

- Main religions include **Islam** for **Pakistani** and **Bangladeshis** and **Hinduism** or **Sikhism** for most **Indians**. Thus, they have their separate places of worship from the mainstream church.
- **Mirza** argues since the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks, carried out by Muslim fundamentalists, **Islam** has been portrayed in a **negative** light. The media has sensationalised events, leading to stereotypes and the word 'Muslim' becoming a synonym for 'terrorism' or 'extremist'. This has led to the rise in Islamophobia, with groups such as the EDL advocating repatriation of Muslim ethnic groups.
- According to Mirza, generally second generation Asians socialised into the equal opportunity policies of the UK, such as those regarding ethnic, gender and sexual toleration, are becoming assimilated into western values. However, the same is not true for young Muslims, where religiosity is increasing with younger people wearing the hijab, attending mosque and accepting Sharia law.



○ **Causes for the rise in Muslim identity:**

- **British Foreign policy** - Many Muslims saw the 2000s invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan as anti-Islamic attacks.
- **Decline of other identity sources** - like political parties, trade unions etc. led young Muslims, whose status is more insecure than older ones, to seek new sources of meaning by asserting an Islamic identity.
- **Multicultural policies** - implemented by Britain to ensure inclusion of all ethnic and cultural groups have led to Muslims demanding things like more faith school, permission to wear traditional dress at work, and even sharia law for the UK.

## Why are ethnic groups more likely to be religious?

- **Modood** found that **Muslims** in the UK had the **highest attendance** for religious services at **62%**. However, ethnic groups generally appeared to attend religious establishments more religious than the white population:
- 57% of Caribbean members of New Protestant church
  - 39% of Sikhs
  - 29% of White Roman Catholic
  - 27% of Hindus
  - 9% of white Church of England
- Moreover, 95% of non-believers were also white according to the 2011 UK census.

## Explanations:

### 1. Functionalism

- Functionalists believe ethnic groups are more religious than the host society as a way to **maintain** their own **cultural identity, tradition**, and have guidelines for how individuals should conduct themselves in their daily lives.
- E.g. Sikh and Hindu temples often play an important role in integrating such communities, acting as **focal points of community** as well as **religious** life.

### 2. Family Pressures

- Asian communities have **closer knit family structures** and presence of the **extended family** can exert more **pressure** to **conform** to religious values, behaviour and worship.

### 3. Commitment/Religiosity:

- In general religious practice is declining in the UK particularly among White Christian young males. However the same is not true for all ethnic groups. Some appear to have more **commitment** toward **religion** and thus have **higher patterns** of **religiosity**.
- E.g. while church membership is declining and they are closing, there is **higher demands** for **mosques** and **temples**, together with **state funded faith schools** for ethnic minority religions.

### 4. Community identity and cohesion:

- **Davie** argues higher levels of **religiosity** help to **maintain tradition**, group **cohesion** and community **solidarity** as places of worship also act as **community centers** providing **unity** for ethnic groups to express their **identity** and unite against the **troubles** of **mainstream society**, such as racism.
- **Modood** claims religion provides ethnic groups with a form of **socialisation**, a means of **maintaining traditional morality** and helps to **cope** with the **worries** and **pressures** of life, perhaps arising from the **hostility** and **discrimination** experienced from wider society.
- Similarly **Bruce** argues religion can act as a form of **cultural defence** against unaccepting mainstream society but as a form of **cultural transition** in which it helps cope with migration.

### 5. Marginalisation and Status Frustration

- Many elder generation Asians, particularly women, may feel **marginalised** in mainstream society as they often have a poor grasp of English and may not engage in activities such as pub life due to religious belief. This can in effect cause **status frustration** and thus religiosity as a form of **escape** since racism affects all minority ethnic groups.

### 6. Social deprivation

- Most ethnic groups experience **high levels of poverty**. E.g. Pakistani and Bangladeshi's are the poorest in Britain, with 63% living below the poverty line in 2009. African Caribbean's also face higher levels of unemployment and thus poverty in effect.
- Thus, **Marx would argue** religion acts as the 'opium of the **ethnic** people' as it provides a comforting diversion from racism and poverty.
- Similarly **Stark and Bainbridge** would argue religion can act as a compensator for ethnic groups and their oppression in the UK as the 'other'.

### 7. Social Identity

- Religion can provide individuals with a **sense of identity**. E.g. customs, dress, festivals. This can act as a form of **resistance** from **status frustration** and **devaluation** of their culture by mainstream society.
- **Johal** found that younger British Asians had formed a **hybrid identity** by adopting elements of the religion of their parents, together with their own personal choice. E.g. they may value their culture, but choose to go against practices like arranged marriages, pre martial sex etc.



## Evaluation of Ethnicity and Religion:

Strength	Limitation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Provides an explanation for ethnic differences regarding the different faith they each follow.</li> <li>➤</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Clusters ethnic groups into two categories (black and Asian), ignoring differences within each as well as hybrid ethnicities.</li> <li>➤ It also overlooks different interpretations of the same religion.</li> <li>➤ Too much focus on Islam at the expense of other religions.</li> <li>➤</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>

### Synoptic Link

# Social Class and Religion

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**Why is the working class  
more religious?**

## Marxism

## Neo -Marxism

### Evaluation of Social Class:

Strength	Limitation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Hinduism justifies the Indian caste system.</li> <li>➤ Most religions have an organisational hierarchy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The appeal of religion is not universal among social classes.</li> <li>➤ The wealthiest people can also be religious. E.g. the Pope.</li> <li>➤</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>

### Synoptic Link

# Religious Organisation

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**See A3 hand-out**

# New Religious Movements

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## Intro:

- New Religious Movements emerged post WW2, particularly from the 1960s onwards.
- They are mostly cults and sects that have little to do with established churches and denominations.

## Examples of NRMs

## Baker - Features of NRMs

Baker (1989) outlines **several features** of NRMs including;

1. Often concerned with the **spiritual** and/or **supernatural**.
2. Mostly **young adults** and **first generation** converts.
3. **Temporary membership** – followers come and go.
4. Usually led by a **charismatic leader**.
5. They are certain to be the '**chosen ones**' and that they hold the **absolute truth**.
6. Sharp distinction between '**us**' – the good and godly, and '**them**' – the bad and satanic outsiders.
7. **Suspicious** or **hostile** towards **wider society**.
8. **Short-lived**, particularly world-rejecting sects, as they require heavy commitment.

## Evaluation of Barker

- Most features can apply to either mainstream religion or their fundamental aspects.
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## Wallis - How to distinguish between NRMs

- **Wallis** developed a **threefold typology** to **distinguish** between **NRMs**:

### 1. World Rejecting NRMs

- **Example**: The People Temple or Heaven's Gate
- Usually **controversial sects** with **strong ethical codes**.
- Highly **critical** of the **outside world**, thus **hostile** to wider society.
- Demand a **significant** level of **commitment** and **uncritical obedience**.
- Can include **communal living** and membership is **exclusive** - based on invite.
- **Often millenarian** – belief that society is evil, sinful or corrupt.
- Members have usually been **marginalised** by mainstream society as such NRMs provide a form of **compensation**. A large number of **middle class students** or **hippies** also join who can **afford** to 'drop out' of society due to affluence.

### 2. World Accommodating NRMs

- **Example**: Neo-Pentecostalism or Charismatic Movement.
- Mainly **orthodox denominations** or offshoots of mainstream religion.
- Concerned with **rediscovering** and **revitalising spirituality** that is thought to be lost.
- Religion is seen as a **personal matter** - based on inner happiness.
- **Accept** the **world** as it is but give members **strategies** to enhance their **happiness**.
- **Does not restrict members**; no collective worship, church attendance or rituals.
- **Often sell a service** like books or courses.
- Entry is through **training**.

### 3. World Affirming NRMs

- Examples: Scientology and Transcendental Meditation.
- Mostly **Cults** that are **worried** by the state of **mainstream religion** and would seek a '**purier**' form of **religious practise**.
- **Lack** most **features** associated with **traditional religious** organisations such as buildings, religious services, rituals and moral codes
- More like **therapy groups** than religious organisations as it claims to access spirituality and unlock human potential.
- They are **concerned** for the state of **society** but **do not** actively **seek** to **change** it.
- Maintain **connections** with **mainstream religions**.
- Members carry on with normal life outside of religion.

**Evaluation of Wallis**

- No religious group will conform exactly to his categories and there may be overlaps between all three.
- He is not clear whether it is the teaching, the movement, beliefs of the group, or outlook of members that distinguish the different attitudes to the world.
- Ignores the diversity of views that exists within cults and sects assuming they all have uniform views.

<b>Strength</b>	<b>Limitation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ NRMs provide a way of distinguishing between traditional religion and those that emerged particularly from the 1960s onwards.</li> <li>➤ Enables us to distinguish between the different types of NRMs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There is a wide range of NRM that do not fit into these categories.</li> <li>➤ NRMs are stereotypes as bring dangerous and controlling.</li> <li>➤ Stark and Bainbridge are critical of all typologies, arguing there is always overlap between categories. Instead they categorise organisations in terms of tension they have with society; beginning with those that have most tension (cults and sects), followed by denomination and churches.</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>

**Synoptic link – which groups are most likely to join NRMs?**

# The New Age / New Age Movement

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## Intro:

- **'New Age'** refers to a **wide diversity** of mind-body ideas, interest and therapies from across the globe that became prominent from the **1980s** onwards.
- New Age ideas can also draw on or combine various aspects of existing religions.
- Heelas sees the New Age consisting of a range of beliefs in self-spirituality in which each individual becomes their own spiritual specialist, dipping into whatever beliefs they desire.

## Examples of NRMs

## Bruce - five features of New Age Religions:

1. **The emphasis is on the self** and freeing the self 'within'.
2. **Everything is connected** – holistic approach claiming mind, body and spirit is all connected to each other and nature.
3. **The individual is the highest** – no religious leader or single truth. Each individual decides their own truth based on personal experience.
4. **The global cafeteria** – broad range of beliefs, therapies and techniques from across the world. Individuals can pick and mix beliefs.
5. **Therapy** is provided to enable happiness, health and success.

## Evaluation of Bruce





## Sutcliffe - Characteristics of New Age Religions

- **Sutcliffe** suggests the New Age refers to a diverse range of ideas and lack features like an origin, leader, shared beliefs and rituals etc. rather it enables like-minded individuals to pursue self-development and explore their inner spirituality.
- **Membership - Open membership** – interested individuals can attend and participate in any activity. Members are united in their quest for spirituality.
- **Organisation** - Nearest it comes to organisational religion is by providing a **loose network** through social networking, meetings, workshops etc.
- **Worship and rituals**- While there is belief in god, the sacred is believed to be within. Thus, there is **no worship but** only **rituals** like chanting, incense burning, yoga etc.
- **Sense of legitimacy** - New Age believers think there are **many truths** based on a range of sources. What's important is what 'works' for the individual in their spiritual quest.
- **Relationship to wider society** - New Age believers **live** in mainstream **society**.
- **Involvement and commitment** - Commitment is usually to **one's own spiritual growth**. Groups are only necessary as long as they satisfy the needs of participants and provide support/encouragement.

### Evaluation of Sutcliffe



## Heelas – New Age Themes

- **Heelas** believes there are a few **key features** of the **New Age**:
  - Belief in **self-spirituality**.
  - **Detraditionalisation** – valuing personal experience comes above the authority of traditional sources.
  - Belief in **responsibility** and **freedom** over one's own actions.
  - Offers **spirituality** and **success**.

### Evaluation of Heelas



<b>Strength</b>	<b>Limitation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ New Age religions suit modern consumerist society which can explain their popularity.</li><li>➤ It provides people with methods to cope with stress and obtain spirituality.</li><li>➤ Importance is placed on the individual and what works for them rather than a rigid holy text.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Almost anything can be considered a religion so long as the individual believes the method or belief is useful for them.</li><li>➤</li><li>➤</li></ul>
<b>Synoptic Link</b>	

# Growth of Religious Groups and Movements

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## Intro:

- In recent years, while church membership is declining, the appeal to sects, cults and New Age religions has grown.

## Factors explaining the growth of religious groups and movements:

### 1. Globalization and the mass media

- **Globalisation** refers to the **growing interdependence** of **societies** across the world. With the spread of the same culture, consumer goods and economic interests across the world.
- **Baudrillard** argues increasing globalisation, particularly in the **media**, means that people across the world have access to a **wide range of ideas and beliefs** from around the world.
- Subsequently, we now live in a **'media saturated society'** in which people can **pick and choose** or **mix and match** any beliefs they please from across the world.

### 2. Postmodernism

1. **Filling in the 'vacuum of meaning' in a postmodern society** – **Lyotard** argues there has been a loss of faith in metanarratives in postmodern societies. As a result, we are experiencing a 'crisis of meaning' in postmodern societies in which NRMs and NARs are filling in the 'vacuum of meaning'.
2. **Identity formation in postmodern society** –the end of metanarratives also mean traditional sources of identity, e.g. Muslim or Christian, is also being lost. Subsequently, people are forming their own individual identity which includes them buying into NRMs and NARs.

## Synoptic link to family

### 3. Practical or pragmatic reasons

1. **Key to success** – according to Heelas NRMs and NARs appeal mostly to the middle class who may find something missing in their lives. Subsequently they can pay to use the various techniques offered by NRMs and NARs to recapture their inner selves through workshop, therapy techniques etc.
2. **Escape** - NRMs and NARs provide people with short term practical solutions to dealing with or escaping from difficult issues regarding any aspect of life from family to work or personal circumstances.

### 4. Protest

- **Stark** suggests NRMs and NARs emerge as a form of **religious** or **social protest** against existing society. Thus, they may appeal to anyone that rejects the norms and values of mainstream society. E.g. War on Terror in which Fundamentalists Muslims are protesting against western norms in Islamic nations.

### 5. Social change

- **Wilson** argues that periods of rapid social change can increase growth of NRMs and NARs as it leads to what Durkheim calls anomie in society. This is a situation of normlessness or uncertainty over social guidelines for behaviour which undermines traditional norms and values or **'universe of meaning'**.

### 6. Secularisation

- **Giddens** argues that growing secularisation in western societies suggests “people who feel that traditional religions have become ritualistic and devoid of spiritual meaning may find comfort and greater sense of community in smaller, less impersonal NRMs and NARs”.
- **Weber** argues secularisation has led **'disenchantment with the world'** by which he means spiritual, magical and mystical elements of the world have diminished. Thus, NRMs and NARs provide a return to such ideas for some people.

### 7. Relative deprivation

- **Stark** argues NRMs and NAMs are likely to attract the middle class because of **relative deprivation**. This refers to a sense of lacking something in comparison to another group. He identifies different types of relative deprivation:
  - **Social deprivation** may stem from a lack of power, prestige and status. E.g. those lacking job satisfaction may find alternative sources of satisfaction in the evangelical goals set by conversionist (born again) sects such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, etc.
  - **Organismic deprivation** is experienced by those who suffer physical and mental problems, e.g. people may turn to sects in the hope of being healed or as an alternative to drugs or alcohol.

### 8. Status frustration

- **Status frustration** refers to a sense of frustration arising in individuals or groups because they are denied a certain status in society.
- **Young people** are more likely to experience status frustration due to the long period of transition from childhood to full independence. Thus, young people are more likely to join NRMs and NARs as it provides support for an identity independent from school or family, thereby helping them deal with their status frustration.
- **Barker** argues young people are also more likely to join NRMs and NARs due to **lack of responsibilities**, such as work, rent, kids etc. This in effect gives them more freedom to choose to get involved in NRMs or NARs, particularly world-rejecting ones as it provides companionship and a sense of independence.
- However, since **status frustration** is **short-lived** as is membership to NRMs and NARs subsequently.

### Social deprivation, marginality and theodicies of disprivilege

- **Weber** argues NRM's and NAR's are likely to occur among **marginal groups** in society. E.g. material deprivation, racism, personal troubles. He suggests that NRM's and NAR's provide a '**theodicy of disprivilege**' which refers to religious explanation and justification provided by cults and sects for the socially marginalised.
- Similarly, **Stark** argues world rejecting NRM's act as a **compensator** to help deal with problems of **marginalization** and **social deprivation**. He argues that middle class young people are mostly attracted to NRM's and NAR's during times of social change as they felt marginalised and disillusioned from the dominant norms and values of society. E.g. 1960's hippy movement, 2011 student tuition fee movement.

Strength	Limitation

# Postmodernism and Religion

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## Intro:

- **Pre-modernity** - **high** religious status.
- **Modernity** - religion in **decline**.
- **Postmodernity** - religion is **privatised**.

For Postmodern Sociologists, the advent of postmodern within religion and society resulted in;

- Previously powerful **religious organisations** becoming **less significant**.
- An **increase** in **fundamentalist** factions within major world religions.
- **New types of religious movements** and networks and development of the so-called 'spiritual shopper'.

## Bauman – Religion and Postmodernity

- Bauman suggests in **modernity** people search for **universal truths** (theories are always true).
- However, **postmodernity rejects** the idea of universal truths and that religious leaders have authority. Instead asserting **people** have **unlimited choice** in regards to their beliefs and choices.
- Thus, without rules found in modernity and the idea that a **rational plan** can be devised to perfect society, people have to make their own **ethical choice**.
- Without agreed ethics in society as a whole **morality** is **privatised** as a personal choice
- People continue to want guidance in what rules to follow, and they turn to experts for advice
- Religious leaders are **experts in morality**, so some people look to them for help. Unlike the modern era, people can turn to any religious leaders, not just the ones they were brought up to respect.
- This leads to more interest in religion and much greater **religious pluralism**, people can also change their religious beliefs if they wish. Whatever beliefs they follow, however, they take them less seriously than they did in the modern era.

## Evaluation

- People are practicing religion through private worship.
- There has been a steady increase in NRMs and NARs.
- Can't explain all religions as Islam has rising membership.
- Bauman contradicts himself by arguing both that people make their own choices and that they turn to religious experts for guidance.

## David Lyon – Jesus in Disneyland

- **Lyon** believes that postmodernist elements are developing in society due to **globalisation** - the development of information technology and growth of consumerism. This led to people having **greater choices** including **greater choice of gods**.
- Subsequently, religion is relocating to the **sphere of consumption**. People are unwilling to be forced to accept the authority of Christian church religion, but they are willing to choose a religious narrative that appeals to them.
- Religion is **no longer a social institution but** rather a **cultural resource** on which people can draw if they wish. E.g. a religious event, the Harvest Day Crusade has been held at Disneyland in California, showing how religion is becoming another part of consumer culture and mixing with the postmodern fantasy world of Disney.
- **Thus, dedifferentiation** is taking place- the blurring of the boundaries and differences between different aspects of social life. In this case the **distinction** between **religion** and **popular culture** is being affected.

### Evaluation

- Changes described by Lyon can point to Secularisation rather than a revival of religion.
- Consumerist religions are short lived, weak and do not have an effect on most people.
- 

## Giddens – High modernity and religion

- **Giddens** sees changes in religion as the last stage in development – what he calls **high modernity** rather than post-modernity. The key feature of high modernity is **reflexivity**, which refers to reflection and development of social life to improve it.
- He believes reflexivity can produce a **questioning of religion** but also **undermine an individual's sense of self**. Thus, people no longer blindly follow tradition but make **conscious choices** about *who they are* and *what they believe in*. This can lead to a sense of personal meaninglessness in which religion can fill the vacuum left by the decline of tradition.
- However, **religious fundamentalism increases** as a result of **high modernity** or **detraditionalisation**.

### Evaluation

- Giddens can account for diversity within religion beliefs today's such as fundamentalism and the New Age. It also explains how religion can survive and prosper in modernity.
- Beckford sees as a weakness of Giddens theories the claim that religion is based upon reflexivity, which could just as easily lead to people choosing atheism as turning to religion.

## Postmodernity and the New Age

- **Hellas** does not see the New Age as part of post-modernity, but claims confusion is due to:
  - Postmodernity involving a **decline** of **traditional beliefs** or **detraditionalisation**. While traditional church and denomination membership is declining, New Age religions are becoming more popular; pointing towards religious postmodernism.
  - Postmodernity also involves **dedifferentiation** – when the boundary between religion and popular culture is blurred – which can also suggest postmodernity.
  - Postmodernity also includes **relativism**- when knowledge is seen as a matter of personal opinion rather than that of facts. The New Age fits this description, as individuals can **pick and choose** aspects of the New Age they wish to follow.
  - The New Age has consumers of its different **‘products’** unlike the believers in traditional religion. **Consumerist culture** is also an aspect of postmodernity.
  - Both postmodernity and the New Age imply we are **entering a new era**.

**However**, Heelas argues that the **New Age** is **not** postmodernity but **part** of the **latest stage** of **modernity** for the following reason:

- The New Age is ultimately based on a **metanarrative** – idea that you should use personal experience to plan your life.
- Some **New Age thinkers** take their beliefs as **seriously** as traditional religions, not as casual aspects of consumer culture.
- The New Age is based upon an extreme **individualism**, which is a key feature of modernity.
- Many aspects of the New Age, such as spiritualism, are not really new, but have a long history. Their origins predate the time when postmodernity is supposed to have started.

## Evaluation



Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Postmodern can explain the rise in NRM and NAR in recent years.</li> <li>➤ It can explain the rise in religion fundamentalism as a reaction to decline in traditional religion.</li> <li>➤ It points to the importance of media in modern society.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ It exaggerates the level of choice all people have in regards to religion.</li> <li>➤ Fundamentalism can be a reaction to modernity rather than increase of choice in postmodernity.</li> <li>➤ Assumes all traditional religions are declining. However, Islam appears to be increasing</li> </ul>

## Synoptic Link



# Religious Fundamentalism

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## Intro:

- Religious fundamentalism has emerged in recent years as a major **political concern**, particular due to the **War on Terror** caused by **Islamic fundamentalism**.
- However, fundamentalism can have various meanings among Sociologists:
  1. **Almond** defines it as a “pattern of **religious militancy** in which **self-defined ‘true believers’** attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity and prevent **secularism**”.
  2. **Bruce** sees fundamentalism as a religion which calls for a return to the “fundamentals of the faith” claiming authority of the religious text as a basis for regulating society.

## 1. Features of fundamentalism

According to **Giddens**, fundamentalism involves the following:

- Seek to **return** to the **fundamentals** of their **faith**, advocating conservative values. Thus, reject **secularisation** and **modernity**.
- **Unquestionable** or **literal** belief in the **truth** of **religious texts** as providing answers to all of life’s important questions.
- Belief that their views are the ‘correct view’ and are thus **intolerant** towards all others. Thus, rejection of **religious pluralism** is apparent.
- **Avoid contact** with others and **rely** upon **guardians** of **tradition**, such as the clergy, to **interpret sacred text** and **lay down rules** that determine their lifestyle.

## 2. Bruce – the causes of fundamentalism

- **Bruce** asserts fundamentalism is caused when groups feel their **tradition** is under **threat** due to **modernity** which is associated with **secularisation**, **differentiation** and **rationalisation**.
- He believes fundamentalism is likely to develop when:
  1. A religion has a **single text**. E.g. Qur’an or Bible
  2. **Common enemy** for believers. E.g. Americans for Muslims.
  3. The religion does **not** have a **central source** of religious **authority**. E.g. Pope for Roman Catholics.
  4. Recruits usual feel threatened or relatively deprived by mainstream society.

## Evaluation of Bruce

- **Almond** believes the following factors are also important which Bruce has overlooked:

1. Low levels of **education**.
2. High levels of **social inequality**.
3. High levels of **migration**.
4. **Economic** problems.
5. **Western imperialism**.

➤ Ignores differences regarding origin, cause and effect of such groups.

## 5. Giddens - the growth of fundamentalism

- Giddens views fundamentalism as a relatively **new word** which had grown as a reaction to **globalisation** as it **undermines traditional social norms** such as the nuclear family, gender and sexuality.
- He argues that today's '**late modern**' **society** is characterised by individual **choice** which comes together with **uncertainty** and **risk**. Thus, fundamentalisms 'return to traditional values' approach promises **certainty** in an uncertain world as it **rejects the rationality** of globalisation.
- However, while fundamentalists reject modernity, they use modern technological methods to spread their message. E.g. Al-Qaeda with video recordings.

## 6. Castells - Responses to postmodernity

- **Castells** views fundamentalism as a **response** to the **risks of postmodernity** characterised by **excessive choice**. He distinguishes between two responses to postmodernity:
  - **Resistant identity** - a defensive reaction of those who **feel threatened** and turn to fundamentalist communities.
  - **Project identity** - those who are **forward-looking** and **engage** with a social movement such as Al-Qaeda.

### Evaluation of Giddens and Castells

- They distinguish too sharply between globalisation/postmodernity and fundamentalism, ignoring 'hybrid' movements.
- They are 'fixated on fundamentalism', ignoring other important developments including how globalisation is also affecting non-fundamentalist religions such as Catholicism.
- They both assume all types of fundamentalism are the same ignoring differences in organisation, cause and effect.
- Fundamentalism is not always a reaction against globalisation but also against corrupt regimes within Middle Eastern countries.

## 7. Bruce - Religion as a cultural defence

- **Bruce** views fundamentalism as a form of **cultural defence** in which a **community unites** to fight against **external threats**. **Religion** is highly important in such situations as it **symbolises collective identity**. Thus, defending the community against a threat gives **religion** a **prominent** role in **politics**.
- As an example he points to the **Iranian Revolution** in which Islam was used to fight the corrupt, brutal, and Western-backed monarchy, the Shah. Eventually, in 1979, an Islamic inspired revolution removed the Shah and created an Islamic republic.
- Similarly in **Poland**, between 1945 and 1989, the Catholic Church symbolised a resistance against the communist regime of the Soviet Union.

### Evaluation of Bruce

- Ignores cases where fundamentalism arises within different aspects of the same culture.
- Assumes religion is the main source of cultural identity.
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## 8. Religion and the 'clash of civilisations'

- According to **Huntington**, conflicts regarding religious fundamentalism has **intensified** in recent year since the collapse of communism in 1989. E.g. 9/11 and 7/7 attacks.
- He views this as a wider '**clash of civilisations**' as **religious** differences have become the major **source of identity** in today's **globalised** world for **three** reasons:
  1. With the fall of communism, **political differences** between nations have become **less important** as a source of identity.
  2. Globalisation has made **nation-states less significant** as a source of identity creating a **gap** that **religion** has **filled**.
  3. Globalisation makes **contact** between civilisations **easier**, **increasing** the chances of **old conflicts re-emerging**.

### Evaluation of Huntington

- Ignores important religious divisions within 'civilisations'. E.g. Sunni vs. Shi'a in Islam.
- 'The clash of civilisations' theory portrays Islam as an enemy. In reality, only a minority of Muslims are interested in a 'holy war' against the West.
- Hostility from Islam is not a 'clash of civilisations' but rather a reaction to oppressive Western foreign policy in the Middle East.
- Ignores other religious fundamentals. Such as Christian fundamentalists in the USA.

# Is religion a unifying force or a source of conflict?

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## Intro:

- **Unifying:** provides consensus and unity in society by bringing people together.
- **Conflict:** provides separation and conflict between two or more groups in society.

## Religion as a unifying force

<b>Functionalism</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Interactionism</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>

Neo-Marxism	Evaluation

**Examples in which  
religion provides unity**

**Evaluation of religion promoting unity:**

Strength	Limitation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Religion in most societies provides unity and avoids conflict.</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ignores the rise in religious fundamentalism in recent years which has caused global conflict (War on Terror).</li> <li>➤ Religion has historically divided people according to different beliefs or different interpretations of the same belief.</li> <li>➤</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>

**Religion as a source of conflict**

<b>Marxism</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Feminism</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>

## Examples of religious conflict

### Evaluation of religion promoting conflict:

Strength	Limitation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Religion has a 'dark side' and is not always open and loving to all people. E.g. women and homosexuals.</li> <li>➤ Vast number of religious conflict throughout history shows support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Downplays the positive aspects of religion.</li> <li>➤ Assumes that religion is not tolerant and will inevitably lead to conflict. Ignoring positive change. E.g. C of E acceptance of female bishops in 2013.</li> <li>➤</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>

# The Secularisation Thesis

## Defining Secularisation

- **Wilson** provides a classic definition of secularisation; “the process whereby religious thinking, practices and institutions lose social significance”.
- **Glasner** identifies three levels of secularisation;
  - **Interpersonal** -
  - **Organisational** -
  - **Cultural** -
- It is possible that secularisation can occur on one level but not necessarily at all.

## Defining Religion

- Difficult to measure secularisation when different definitions of religion are used.
- In its broadest sense religion can be defined as system of beliefs based on humanity, spirituality and moral values.

### 2 definitions:

1. **Substantive** – focus on the content of religion.
  2. **Functional** – focus on the function of religion.
- Substantive definition of religion is more likely to support the secularisation thesis, while functional definitions are likely to reject it.

## Measuring religious belief and practice

- Measuring religiosity is highly problematic due to an individual’s definition of religion but also what it means to be religious.

Validity of church attendance statistics	Reliability of church attendance statistics



# Evidence for Secularisation

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**Secularisation**

# Evidence against Secularisation

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**Against  
Secularisation**

## Synoptic Link

## Evaluation of secularisation

# Ideology and Religion

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## Intro:

- The word ideology has **various meanings**. Most **commonly** it refers to a set of **ideas** and **values**, shared by a **social group**, that provide a means of **interpreting** the **world** and represents or justifies the **interest** of that particular social group.

## Different conceptions of ideology

### 1. Pluralist ideology

- **Pluralism** refers to the **dispersal** of **power** in society among **different groups** rather than one centralised body.
- **Pluralist ideology** refers to idea that there are many different social groups in society, which **live together**, and **compete** for **power equally**. Thus, **no one** group has **absolute power** or **privilege** but rather all ideologies are believed to be of equal worth.
- It **denies** that there may be an **unequal distribution of power** in society, and that **not all social groups** are **equally able to influence** those with **power**.

## Evaluation of Pluralist ideology

- Assumes all views are given equal weight in society, ignoring wider power structures.
- UK has highly centralised political system which means some groups will lose out over other.
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### 2. Marxist and Neo-Marxist ideology

- **Marx** famously asserted “**The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas**” suggesting that ideologies throughout society **reflect** the **interest** of the **ruling class**; or the **bourgeoisie**. He refers to the **ideas** of the **ruling class** as the ‘**dominant ideology**’.
- According to **Marx** the ruling class **deliberately obscures facts** to **conceal class inequalities** and to **justify capitalist society**, thus **preventing revolutionary change**.
- **Althusser** believes ruling class ideology is spread through the **ideological state apparatus** – institutions, such as education or media, which spread the dominant ideology of the ruling class in various ways. E.g. education achieves it through the hidden curriculum.
- **Gramsci** coined the term **hegemony** which refers to the ruling class **maintaining** their **power** by **persuading** the **proletariat** to **accept** their dominant ideology as their **own** rather than through force.

## Evaluation of Marxist and Neo-Marxist ideology

- Ignores the global impact of religion, assuming most people are ignorantly accepting exploitation.
- Deterministic in assumes all superstructures, such as religion, family and education, are all driven from the economic base.
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### 3. Feminist ideology

- While Marxists identified dominant ideology, **Feminists** have highlighted the importance of **patriarchal ideology**. This refers to a set of ideas that tries to **justify the power and domination of men** over women in society.
- Feminists regard **religion** and **religious organizations** as **patriarchal** and are thus concerned with **prompting** and **protecting** the interest of **women**. E.g. **Millet** argues **non-violent** methods of **indoctrination**, like religion, are used to enable women to **accept patriarchy** as a **just ideology** through **myths** like **Adam and Eve**.

## Evaluation of Feminist ideology

- Can't explain why women are more religious than men.
- Can't explain why most women themselves are not feminists.
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## Ideology and Religion

- Religion, like ideology, provides a **means** of **understanding** and **explaining** the **world**. However, unlike ideology, **religious beliefs** are **not** necessarily tied to the interests a particular social group but is usually **open to all**.
- According to **Giddens** religion is a set of “shared beliefs and rituals that provide a sense of ultimate meaning and purpose by creating an idea of reality that is sacred, all-encompassing, and supernatural”.
- There are **three main aspects** to **religion**:
  - 1) Belief in the **supernatural** and **spiritual**.
  - 2) **Faith** on the part of **believers** without empirical evidence.
  - 3) A body of **unchanging truth** so that new discovers are molded to fit into existing frameworks.
- However, the two can be interlinked as a social group can use religion for its own end, like promoting and protecting a particular interest. E.g. Neo Marxism with Liberation Theology.

# Science and Religion

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## Intro:

- **Science** and **religion** are often regarded as **competing** explanations of the world.
- Science aspires to the principles of **objectivity** and **value-freedom** based on **empirical research**, while **religion** is based on **faith** and the **supernatural**. However, science can also be regarded as an ideology as it is subjective to social prejudices.

## Popper - what is science?

- Popper suggests **science** involve **five** steps;
  1. **Hypothesis formation** – forming ideas which are capable of being tested.
  2. **Falsification** – testing hypothesis against evidence to try and prove it wrong.
  3. **Prediction** – making a prediction regarding the cause and effects of the research.
  4. **Theory formation** – once hypothesis has been tested and stood strong, a theory can be formed from the results which becomes a ‘scientific truth’.
  5. **Scrutiny** – the theory is scrutinised by other scientists and will only be regarded as a scientific truth until it is falsified by another theory.
- According to Popper research should aim **not to prove** their **hypotheses** true, **but false**, as no hypothesis can ever be proven true since there is always the possibility of a future exception.
- Thus, if Popper’s approach is accepted, **science** may **displace religion** as there is **no evidence to disprove** that **god exists**, or does not exist, thus preventing the chance of these stages.

## Evaluation of Popper



## Kuhn – paradigms and scientific revolutions

- **Kuhn** challenges Popper’s idea of falsification by arguing scientists work within a **paradigm** (a framework based on particular set of values) which **colours** their views of their **research**.
- Thus, when scientists **test** their **hypotheses** they try to fit their findings into an **existing paradigm**, rather than attempt to falsify, thereby dismissing evidence which contradicts them as experimental errors or outliers.

- According to Kuhn, there are **three key paradigms** within **science**:
  1. **Pre-science**: period of discovery where there was no central paradigm.
  2. **Normal science**: where scientists used an established paradigm, like the theory of evolution, to support theories.
  3. **Revolutionary science**: where the paradigms are challenged.
- Thus, he suggests what passes as **science** is **not** always a '**fact**' as it is affected by **scientific values**. This suggests that **science**, like religion, **does not** always **provide** an **absolute truth** and is thus not superior subsequently.

### Evaluation Khun



### Social influences on scientific research

- There are a range of factors which affects the **objectivity** of **scientific** research:
  - The **values** and **beliefs** of the **researcher**.
  - **Career aspirations** of scientist means they would be less inclined to falsify their own theory.
  - **Funding bodies** can determine how the research is carried out.
- This suggests that **science** itself can be a **form** of **ideology** as it's **not** always **objective, value free**, and **open** to **social influences**. Thus, scientists **do not** always try to **falsify** their theory, as Popper claims, but may be **inclined** to fit their theories into **existing scientific ideology**, just like religion does.

### Evaluation of the social influences on scientific research



## Science and Religion

### Bruce and Comte– science as a product of modernity

- Bruce argues that it is **scientific method** (how to conduct research), rather than **scientific discoveries**, which provides the greatest **challenge** to **religion**.
- He believes this line of thought developed during **modernity** which is concerned with **evidence-based causes and effects** search for answers.
- Thus, during modernity, **religious explanations** and **superstitions** has been **replaced** by **scientific explanations** and are said to be ‘wrong’. E.g. Evolution vs. creation.
- Similarly **Comte** believes society has gone through **three** stages of **human understanding**:
  1. **Theological**– where phenomena is explained through the supernatural. E.g. gods, spirits etc.
  2. **Metaphysical** – where phenomena is explained by the action of natural forces and entities. E.g. Nature.
  3. **Positive or scientific** – where a phenomenon is explained according to rational scientific explanations based on empirical evidence, logic and rationality. **Weber** believed there would be growing ‘disenchantment of the world’ in this stage, meaning the significance of religion will eventually decline.

### Evaluation Bruce and Comte



### Ideology, science and religion in postmodernism

- **Postmodernism** is characterised by **choice** and **diversity** and thus it is claimed that such a society is **rapidly changing** and therefore marked by **chaos** and **uncertainty**.
- For Postmodernists, **religion**, **science** and **ideology** are all **metanarratives** – theories or explanations about how the world/society operates – because they all provide an explanation of the world.
- *Lyotard* argues metanarratives can no **longer required** in a **postmodern** society as each **individual** is able to **pick** and **choose** their own ‘**truth**’. In a postmodern world **all viewpoints** are **valid** and nobody tries to impose their metanarrative on to others in society. Thus, he claims that **religion**, **ideology** and **science** will eventually **diminish**.
- Moreover, Postmodernists argue **science** can **no longer** claim **superiority** as it has **failed** to find **cures** for issues like cancer, AIDs, global warming etc. In addition, many scientists have shown themselves to be **servicing** the **interests** of **wealthy corporations**, thus influencing the objectivity of research.



## Evaluation of Postmodernism

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### Synoptic link for ideology

### Synoptic link for science

## Conclusion

- **Science** has **not displaced religion** as of yet, many millions of people still identify themselves with the major religions of the world, and show loyalty in extremes cases like Islamic fundamentalists . Also rise in NRMs means that many people still some sort of faith. E.g. superstition, ghosts, good luck charms.