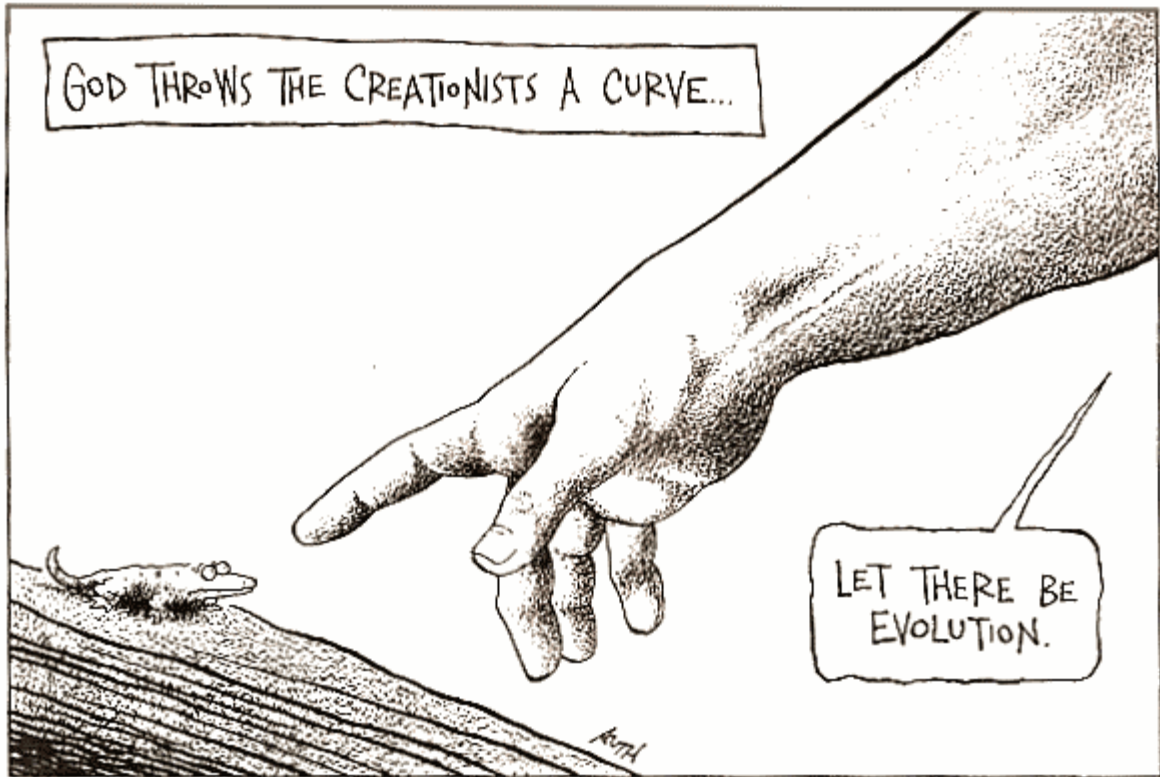


Beliefs in Society



Key Studies



Beliefs in Society – THE SPECIFICATION

- 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.*
- 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;*
 - *Fundamentalist beliefs: 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 and spiritual belief and practice.
 - *Typologies of religious organisations: churches, denominations, sects and cults, with examples of each;*
 - *New Religious Movements and typologies of NRMs eg 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, desecralisation, disenchantment, individuation;*
 - *Arguments and evidence for and against secularisation eg attendance and membership; believing without belonging; the secularisation cycle theory and compensators (Stark and Bainbridge); UK compared with other countries (eg USA) and global significance of religion today.*

1. Berger and Luckmann argue that beliefs are socially constructed.
2. Science can be seen as a social construction.
3. Many of today's beliefs are based on theories produced by scientists.
4. The Enlightenment view of science was based on two principles: the belief that reason could provide an understanding of the world and the view that this understanding could be used for the betterment of humankind.
5. Traditionally, in modern society, science was seen to be based on objective observation and measurement.
6. According to Popper, scientific theories can be falsified but cannot be proved.
7. So-called facts can be seen as fabricated or socially constructed. As such, they are not objective.
8. According to Kuhn, science is directed by paradigms constructed within communities of scientists.
9. Giddens argues that in late modern society there are serious doubts about the objectivity and value of modern science.
10. According to Beck, late modern society is characterised by uncertainty and risk. He sees science as contributing to this situation.
11. Lyotard sees science as one of the metanarratives which are increasingly dismissed in postmodern society.

THEORIES OF IDEOLOGY

The term **ideology** has several meanings:

- i) As a set of **political beliefs**, e.g. socialism, liberalism.
- ii) As the **ideas** and **beliefs** of a **particular social class**.
- iii) As the **dominant ideas** and **beliefs** of the **ruling class**.
- iv) As the **official beliefs** of a **political system**, e.g. in totalitarian (dictatorial) regimes like Hitler's Germany.
- v) As a set of beliefs that represent a **total view of reality**, e.g. religious fundamentalism.

MARXISTS see ideology as the set of ruling ideas that **keep workers in their place**.

FEMINISTS see ideology as both the sets of ideas that **keep women oppressed** (patriarchal ideology), and a potentially **liberating set of beliefs** (feminism).

LIBERALS (or **PLURALISTS**) tend to see ideology as **totalitarian** and **oppressive** – e.g. Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany both had official ideologies which were repressive. Pluralists **reject** the idea that there can be a **monopoly of truth**.



KARL MARX said Ideology was a false picture of reality, imposed by the ruling class.

- i) In capitalist societies, workers are employed to **produce goods** which are sold by their employers for a **profit**.
- ii) Only a **bit** of this profit ends up in the **workers' wages** – most of it's **kept** by the employer.
- iii) Marx said if workers were allowed to notice this **unfairness** they'd **revolt** and riot.
- iv) Ruling ideas (or **ideology**) are needed by the ruling class to make a grossly unfair system **appear fair** and **legitimate** and therefore keep it going.
- v) Marx claimed that ideology creates a **false consciousness** for the workers. It gets them to **believe** that the system and their **position** within it are both **fair** and **just** by **mystifying** and **falsifying** their picture of reality.
- vi) The function of ideology for Marx then was to keep the workers in their place and **stop them rebelling**.
- vii) According to Marx only the ruling class has an ideology because only they have the need to **create illusions**.

THE MARXIST VIEW OF IDEOLOGY WAS DEVELOPED FURTHER BY GRAMSCI.

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was a Marxist who called the domination of ruling class ideology in society 'hegemony'.

- i) Hegemonic ideas don't just rule – they **dominate**. Other values and ideas still exist in society, but don't get taken seriously. Ruling class ideas become '**the common sense of the age**'.
- ii) Nobody questions 'common sense' and so **nobody questions the ruling class's right to rule**. Gramsci argued that the ruling class's ideology becomes **entrenched** in all areas of social life – e.g. religion, law, art, language, education. This makes it difficult to challenge. "...the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to maintain the active consent of those over whom it rules." (Gramsci, 1971, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*).
- iii) The **struggle** against hegemony for Gramsci had to be an **intellectual** one with socialist thinkers developing an alternative '**proletarian hegemony**' (proletarian = working class).

KARL MANNHEIM IDENTIFIED TWO TYPES OF IDEOLOGY.

Mannheim (1929) argued that ideology can be defined in two ways:

- i) A set of beliefs used to **justify** and **perpetuate** an existing social order (a ruling class ideology).
- ii) A **utopian** set of beliefs about how the world **could be organised** in the **future**. Utopian ideologies tend to be formed by **oppressed groups** who want **radical change**.

According to Mannheim both types of ideology **distort reality** – the former is a distortion to create the illusion of **fairness** in society, the latter is just a '**wish image**' of what the future might be like.

ALTHUSSER ARGUED THERE WERE IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUSES.

- i) The neo-Marxist **Althusser** argued that elements of society like the education system, mass media and religion were **Ideological State Apparatuses** (ISAs).
- ii) The ISAs are a tool of capitalism used to **justify, maintain** and **reproduce** class inequalities.
- iii) For example, according to Althusser, education **transmits** and **passes on** an ideology about what it means to be working class, what it means to be middle class, and what everyone's **place in society** ought to be.

THEORIES OF SCIENCE

THE TRADITIONAL VIEW IS THAT SCIENCE IS OBJECTIVE AND EVIDENCE-BASED.

Many scientists claim there is a clear **distinction** between **science** and other ways of viewing the world. A recent example is **Richard Dawkins**, who in *The God Delusion* (2006) made the following observations about science and religion:

"Fundamentalists know they are right because they have read the truth in a holy book...The truth of the holy book is an axiom, not the end product of a process of reasoning. The book is true, and if the evidence seems to contradict it, it is the evidence that must be thrown out, not the book. By contrast, what I, as a scientist believe...I believe not because of reading a holy book but because I have studied the evidence... When a science book is wrong, somebody eventually discovers the mistake and it is corrected in subsequent books. That conspicuously doesn't happen with holy books."

THE TRADITIONAL VIEW OF SCIENCE:

- 1) **Science is objective** – the scientist is neutral.
- 2) Scientific enquiry is **evidence-based** – conclusions are based on evidence, not **preconceived ideas**.
- 3) Scientific enquiry is '**open**' – ideas which are **tested** and proved wrong are rejected and **more accurate** ideas replace them.

THE TRADITIONAL VIEW OF SCIENCE HAS BEEN CHALLENGED

Michael Lynch (1983) argued that science is far **less objective** than scientists claim.

- i) Lynch studied scientists experimenting on lab rats and concluded that the scientists were more **influenced** by their **existing theories** than may have been expected.
- ii) When '**anomalies**' occurred – i.e., results they were not expecting – the scientists often put them down to **errors** in the photographs they were studying, rather than seeing them as **evidence** towards a new theory or hypothesis.

SCIENCE CAN BE VIEWED AS A BELIEF SYSTEM LIKE RELIGION

Polanyi (1958) suggested that a **belief system** was made up of **three factors**. Science can be viewed as fitting this model.

- i) **A circulatory of beliefs** – each idea within the belief system is explained in **relation to others**. If one is challenged or fails it is **defended** by reference to another, to **avoid changing** the belief system.
- ii) **Supporting explanations are give for difficult situations** – if any **evidence** is shown to **contradict** the belief there will be a reason to explain it (as with the anomalies in the experiments Lynch observed).
- iii) **No alternative belief systems can be tolerated** – a **sweeping rejection** of religion could be seen as an example this.

SOCIOLOGY CAN BE TREATED AS A SCIENCE.

Positivists like Comte believe that sociology is scientific. It consists of **gathering information** about the social world, **classifying data** and **drawing conclusions** about '**the social laws**' which govern human society.

The positivist **Durkheim** claimed that by using the technique of **multivariate analysis**, 'social facts' could be uncovered.

- 1) Multivariate analysis is the attempt the **isolate** the impact of **independent variables** (the factors affecting something) on the dependent variable (the thing being affected).
- 2) For instance, the level of working class achievement in a school might be the **dependent** variable, and material deprivation and teacher labelling the **independent variables**.
- 3) Durkheim believed that by complex, in-depth **statistical analysis** the independent variables could be measured and a **social law established**.

The early positivists used an **inductive** approach. This means that they first **collected data on their topic**, which they **studied** and **analysed**. From this they composed a **theory** or **hypothesis**. Then then **tested** their hypothesis and drew **conclusions**. If their results were **repeatable** (i.e. if people repeated their experiment and got the same results), the hypothesis was considered a **social fact**.

POPPER SAID SCIENTISTS SHOULD USE THE DEDUCTIVE APPROACH AND FALSIFICATION

The **deductive approach** is similar to the inductive approach, only in reverse – it starts with the theory, which then leads to the investigation. **Karl Popper** (1959, 1963) argued that theories or hypotheses could spring from anywhere, such as **flashes of inspiration** ('eureka moments') or even from **dreams**.

Popper said the positivists were **wrong** in their belief that theories could be **proved** to be **true**. He had a different idea of scientific method –

- i) Popper rejected the idea that there are **permanent social laws** governing human behaviour. He claimed that any 'law' could at some point be **falsified** (proved wrong), no matter how many times it has been 'proved' correct in the past.
- ii) The famous example he gave was the hypothesis '**all swans are white**', which can be 'proved' thousands of times until you encounter a **rare black swan**.
- iii) Popper said the aim of science and social science should be to constantly **strive to falsify** theories. This '**falsification**' of theories arguably distinguishes science from religion and other supernatural belief systems.

GOMM ARGUED THAT SCIENTISTS' WORK SHOULD BE VIEWED IN ITS SOCIAL CONTEXT

Roger Gomm (1982) argued that the theories scientists produce are in part a product of their **social context**, and that scientists tend to try and **prove** rather than falsify their theories. Gomm gave the example of **Darwin** and this **theory of evolution** to explain this.

- i) Gomm suggests that Darwin's theories of **natural selection** and the **competitive struggle** for the survival of the fittest were **not supported by all the evidence**.
- ii) Darwin therefore missed the opportunity of '**falsify**' aspects of his theories. Gomm suggests the reason for this was **ideological** rather than scientific.
- iii) Gomm argued that the '**survival of the fittest theory**' slotted neatly into the **Victorian capitalist ideology** of free market economics, individualism, and the minimalist approach to welfare for the poor. Gomm therefore emphasised the importance of placing 'science' in its **social context**. Scientific knowledge can be seen, at least in part, as **socially constructed**.

KUHN CHALLENGED THE IDEA THAT SCIENCE IS OBJECTIVE.

Thomas Kuhn (1962) introduced the idea that scientists, at certain times in history, work in a **paradigm**.

- i) A paradigm, according to Kuhn, refers to the **framework** of **accepted ideas** in which scientists operate. It might include ideas on **truth, validity** and **methodology**.
- ii) Kuhn argued that scientists will tend to work within the paradigm and so seek evidence which **supports** it. This will continue until **anomalies** are so strong as to trigger a **paradigm shift** or **scientific revolution**.
- iii) When this happens, a new '**normal science paradigm**' is established and the process begins again.

1. The term ideology has many meanings.
2. According to Popper, ideology is a closed system of thought which rejects alternative views.
3. According to Marx, ruling class ideology:
distorts reality; produces a false consciousness; justifies inequality; supports the position of the ruling class and reflects the economic relationships in the infrastructure.
4. Gramsci argues that beliefs and ideas can change society – they are not simply a reflection of the infrastructure.
5. Gramsci claims that the working class have a dual consciousness which allows them a limited view through the smokescreen of ruling class ideology.
6. According to Abercrombie et al., there is little evidence that the working class accept the dominant ideology.
7. Despite the rejection of many aspects of Marxism, Marx's views on ideology remain influential.
8. Some feminists claim that patriarchal ideology justifies and maintains male dominance and makes it appear normal and natural.
9. Political ideologies are sets of beliefs which guide political action and seek to shape public policy.
10. Liberalism emphasises individual freedom, equality of opportunity and government by consent.
11. Conservatism emphasises tradition, a strong state and the family as the cornerstone of society.
12. Socialism emphasises collectivism, equality and co-operation.

1. Substantive definitions of religion ask what religion is. For example, religion is a belief in the supernatural.
2. Functional definitions ask what are the functions or roles of religion in society. For example, religion strengthens social solidarity.
3. Durkheim's functionalist analysis states that religion reinforces the collective consciousness and strengthens social solidarity.
4. Malinowski argues that religion reduces the disruption caused by life crises and the anxiety produced by activities whose outcome is uncontrollable and uncertain.
5. Parsons claims that religion deals with the 'problem of meaning' by providing answers to universal questions such as why do people die unjustly. Religion also sacralises and legitimates core values which, in turn, strengthens social consensus.
6. Bellah argues that civil religion – a faith in Americanism – unites American society.
7. For Marx, religion reflects the alienation and exploitation of class-based society. It acts as a system of social control, it justifies social inequality, it produces false consciousness, and provides compensation for alienation and oppression. In doing so, religion discourages political action by the subject class to improve their situation.
8. Some Neo-Marxists argue that religion can challenge ruling class dominance – for example, liberation theology in Latin America.

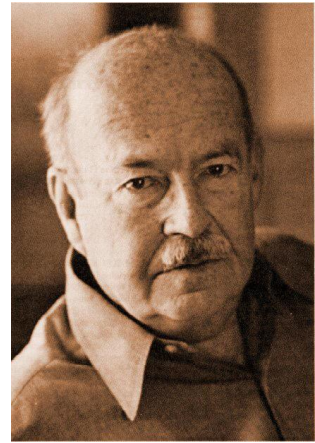
9. Many feminists claim that religion is a patriarchal institution. Supernatural beings and religious professionals are overwhelmingly male. And in many religions, women play a secondary role in worship. In strongly religious societies, women tend to have fewer options and less favourable treatment.
10. Weber argues that at certain times and places, religion can be a force for social change. He claims that early forms of Protestantism, particularly Calvinism, encouraged the rise of capitalism. The Protestant Ethic, with its emphasis on hard work, self-discipline and self-denial, provided the basis for the spirit (or essence), of capitalism.
11. Weber's views have been widely criticised. For example, some critics argue that capitalism preceded early forms of Protestantism.
12. Peter Berger agrees with Weber's view that rationalisation has led to disenchantment. He argues that the pluralisation of people's life-worlds has produced an unprecedented awareness of different belief systems. This undermines traditional religious teachings. The result is anomie. Religion no longer has the power to give meaning to life.
13. According to postmodernists, the metanarratives of modern society have been undermined in postmodern society. As a result, knowledge and beliefs are increasingly seen as relative. This has led to a decline in traditional religion which can no longer claim a monopoly of the truth.
14. Some researchers have seen the rise of religious fundamentalism as a response to this development. They see people going 'back to basics' in an age of uncertainty.
15. People are seen to increasingly construct their own identities in postmodern society – largely on the basis of what they consume. The growth of new religious movements reflects this – people can select a mixture of beliefs and practices to suit their desired identity. (Madonna – Like a Prayer and Kabbala).

Talcott
Parsons
ESSAYS
IN
SOCIOLOGICAL
THEORY
REVISED EDITION

Parsons

He wrote

**ESSAYS IN
SOCIOLOGICAL
THEORY. 1964.**



A Functionalist theoretical perspective - religion provides guidelines for behaviour (morals) which are necessary for order & stability in society.

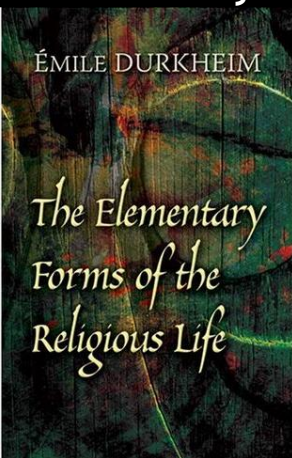
KEY CONCEPTS: value consensus, social order, meaning, social stability.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * Human action is directed & controlled by norms provided by the social system. Religion is part of the cultural system, so religious beliefs provide guidelines for human action & standards against which people's conduct can be judged.
- * Religion aids social order in two ways:
 - 1) Individuals are sometimes hit by events they can't foresee or control. So religion is a mechanism of readjustment to restore the normal pattern of life.
 - 2) Religion deals with uncertainty as humanity is unable to predict or control the effects of weather on agriculture etc, so religion provides confidence, "God will answer our prayers". This maintains **social stability** by relieving tension.
- * Religious beliefs give meaning to life & answer "man's questions about himself and the world he lives in". It helps us to make sense of what's going on & promotes **social order** and stability.

RESEARCH METHOD: This was theoretical, not supported by any empirical evidence - actually going out there and observing...

WEAKNESSES: Ignores dysfunctional aspects of religion such as division and hostility that has been demonstrated between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, the Sunnis and Shias in Iraq and the Muslims and Hindus in India. In these cases, religion is actually a **threat** to social order and stability.



Durkheim

He wrote

THE ELEMENTARY FORMS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE.



Studied Aboriginal Totemism & argued religion is essential to the collective conscience of a society.

KEY CONCEPTS: sacred, profane, collective conscience, totemism, collective worship, civil religion.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

* Religion is based upon the division of the world into the **sacred** & the **profane**. Sacred things were symbols of the clans of Aboriginal society & can be applied to religion in general. Clans were like a large extended family, where members had a duty to protect and assist each other. Clans were represented symbolically by **totems** (or drawings called *churingas*).

* "If the totem is at once the symbol of god and of the society, is that not because the god and the society are only one?" In worshipping a god, people are actually worshipping society. It is easier to worship a simple symbol than a more complex thing as a clan.

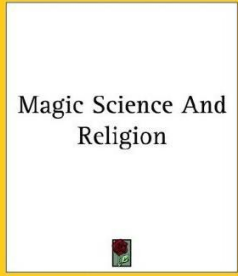
* Social life was impossible without a **collective conscience**. Religion reinforces the collective conscience by reminding & strengthening our belief in values and morals.

* Through **collective worship** society comes together to express their faith in shared norms and values which unite the group.

* Beliefs in gods & spirits is the worship of dead relatives & therefore the shared culture that their relatives passed on to society.

RESEARCH METHOD: Theoretical examination of the totemic religion of Australian Aborigines, but only through reading about it.

WEAKNESSES: Ungeneralisable small sample of non-literate Aboriginal groups; can't apply to modern societies. Overstates degree to which collective conscience shapes behaviour.



Bronislaw Malinowski

Malinowski

He wrote

**MAGIC, SCIENCE &
RELIGION &
OTHER ESSAYS.
1954.**



Carried out fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands and argued religion reinforces social solidarity in times of crisis & threat.

KEY CONCEPTS: Crises of life, prediction, control.

SUMMARY OF STUDY:

- * Sees religion as reinforcing social **norms & values** & promoting **social solidarity** by dealing with situations of collective emotional stress that threaten **social solidarity**.
- * Religion and **life crises** - anxiety & tension disrupt social life, crises of life such as birth, puberty, marriage & death. Funerals express the belief of immortality which denies death & comforts the bereaved. The social group unites at a funeral which expresses **social solidarity** & reintegrates society through rituals & stating beliefs through them.
- * Religion, **prediction & control** - rituals surround dangerous or threatening events that can't be controlled or predicted by humans. In the Trobriand Islands, fishing in the open sea was preceded by rituals to ensure a good catch & protect the fishermen. These rituals reduced anxiety, gave confidence & promoted **social solidarity** by comforting the social group.

RESEARCH METHOD: Empirical; carried out fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands, New Guinea. This was a small-scale, non-literate society.

WEAKNESSES: Criticized for exaggerating the importance of religious rituals in helping people cope. Tambiah argued that rituals were simply related to maintaining peoples' prestige in society & have little to do with dealing with uncertainty or danger. This is because he found that rituals were associated with growing yams with which to make payments to their sisters' husbands.

Bellah

He wrote

CIVIL RELIGION.

Carried out fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands and argued religion reinforces social solidarity in times of crisis & threat.

KEY CONCEPTS: Civil religion.

SUMMARY OF STUDY:

* Civil religion.

RESEARCH METHOD: Empirical; carried out fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands, New Guinea. This was a small-scale, non-literate society.

WEAKNESSES: Criticized for exaggerating the importance of religious rituals in helping people cope. Tambiah argued that rituals were simply related to maintaining peoples' prestige in society & have little to do with dealing with uncertainty or danger. This is because he found that rituals were associated with growing yams with which to make payments to their sisters' husbands.

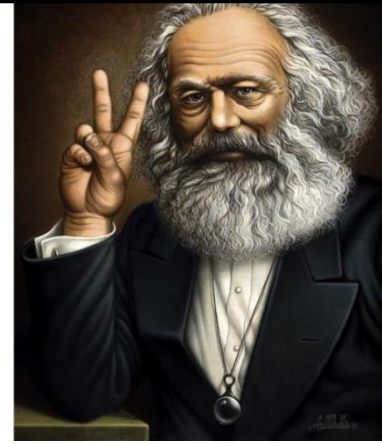
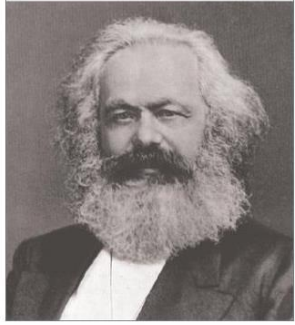
Marx on
Religion

Edited by
John Reines

Marx

He wrote

**ON RELIGION.
PUBLISHED 1957.**



Theory which argues religion is part of the superstructure, used to mentally control the working class & support capitalism.

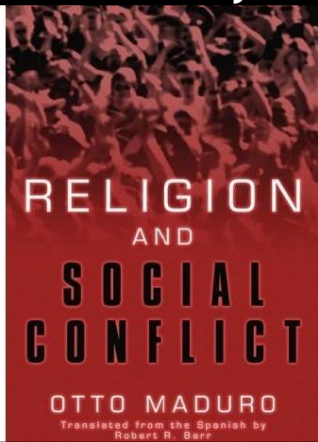
KEY CONCEPTS: false class consciousness, mechanism of social control.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * Religion dulls the pain of capitalist oppression in a number of ways: i) promise of eternal life makes life more bearable; ii) suffering seen as a virtue "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven." iii) hope of supernatural intervention to solve problems on earth makes present more acceptable and prevents challenge; iv) justifies the social order & class system & person's position within it. "The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate, God made them high and lowly and ordered their estate."
- * Religion is a **mechanism of social control** by keeping people in their place, discouraging people from trying to change their situation & preventing thoughts of overthrowing the capitalist system.
- * Religion distorts reality & produces a **false class consciousness** which blinds the subject class to their true situation & the real source of their oppression. This maintains ruling class power.
- * If oppression via capitalism came to an end (via a revolution) then religion would no longer be necessary.
- * Evidence to support - the Caste system and George W Bush.

RESEARCH METHOD: this is purely theoretical.

WEAKNESSES: Religion can sometimes inspire revolution; it does not explain the existence of religion in non-Capitalist societies; religion did not disappear under Communism.



Maduro

He wrote

**RELIGION AND
SOCIAL CONFLICT.
1982.**



“Religion ... often is one of the main (and sometimes the only) available channel to bring about a social revolution.”

KEY CONCEPTS: *relative autonomy, liberation theology.*

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * While accepting many aspects of Marx's analysis of religion, he places greater emphasis on the idea that religion has some independence, or '*relative autonomy*' (freedom), from the capitalist economic system.
- * He argues that religion has the potential to be revolutionary and to directly challenge oppression.
- * He uses the Catholic religion in Latin America as evidence and argues that it used to accept the oppressive dictatorships that ruled. However, Catholic priests started to criticize the ruling class and preach *liberation theology*, arguing that it was the duty of church members to fight against unjust and oppressive right-wing dictatorships. In 1979, Catholic revolutionaries supported the Sandinistas when they took control over Nicaragua.

RESEARCH METHOD: *this is a purely theoretical approach, using prior knowledge. Not based on empirical evidence but on evidence from real world events.*

WEAKNESSES: *Lacking empirical rigor - how do we know how religious the Liberation Theology priests were? More often than not, religions around the world fail to challenge oppression.*



Armstrong

She wrote

**THE END OF
SILENCE: WOMEN
& PRIESTHOOD.
1993.**



She argues that women have not always been subordinate within most religions.

KEY CONCEPTS: female goddesses, monotheism.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * Using data from archaeologists, she argues in early history 'women were considered central to the spiritual quest'. In the Middle East, Asia and Europe, numerous symbols of a pregnant, naked woman as the Great Mother Goddess were dug up. These represented the mysteries of life and fertility.
- * "The earth produced plants and nourished them in rather the same way as a woman gave birth to a child and fed it from her own body. The magical power of the earth seemed vitally interconnected with the mysterious creativity of the female sex."
- * There were very few early symbols of male gods and these societies also had female priests.
- * Decline of women in religion started with Semitic & Aryan invasions who brought with them male gods. For example, the goddess of the sea, Tiamat, was replaced with the male god Marduk. **Monotheism** (belief in a single god) originated with the positioning of Yahweh (Hebrew god) whose masculinity would ensure obedience from men as well as women.

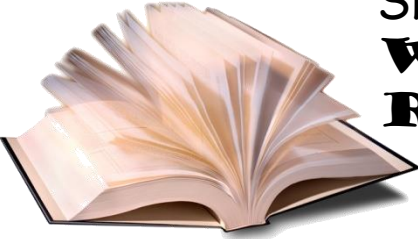
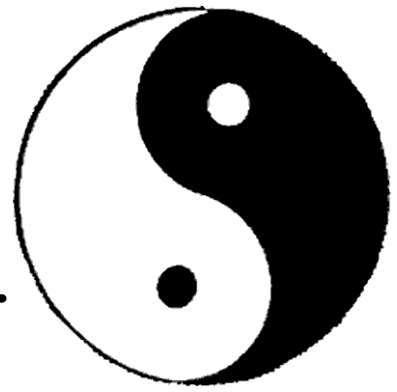
RESEARCH METHOD: theoretical; uses secondary sources of historical and archaeological records to reinforce her arguments.

STRENGTHS: explains how religion came to be male dominated.

Holm

She edited

**WOMEN IN
RELIGION. 1994.**



She reviewed some of the ways in which women are subordinated and devalued by different religious beliefs.

KEY CONCEPTS: women's subordination.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * In religious practice, women are usually far from equal to men. In Japanese folk religions women are responsible for organizing public rituals, but only men can take part. In Chinese popular religion, women are associated with Yin, men with Yang - Yang spirits are more important and powerful. Buddhist monks are seen as superior to all nuns. Orthodox Judaism allows only men to take a full part in ceremonies. In some Islamic regions, women are not allowed to enter mosques for worship and men have made all the legal rulings.
- * "Menstruation and childbirth are almost universally regarded as polluting. In many traditions women are forbidden to enter sacred places or touch sacred objects during the menstrual period."
- * But she does see evidence of changes where the inequality between men and women in religion is being gradually reduced.

RESEARCH METHOD: purely theoretical, but drawing upon secondary sources that examine the position of men and women in religion.

WEAKNESSES: There needs to be closer differentiation between religion and culture. For example, in Islam, the concept of female circumcision is forbidden by Mohammed but is almost universally held as a religious ritual.

Simone
de Beauvoir

The Second Sex

De Beauvoir

She wrote

**THE SECOND SEX.
1949.**



Argued religion acts for women in similar ways to those in which Marx suggested religion acted for oppressed classes.

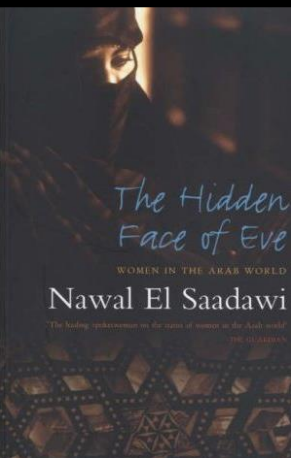
KEY QUOTE: Religion can be used by the oppressors (men) to control the oppressed group (women) and it also serves as a way of compensating women for their second-class status."

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * Men have generally exercised control over religious beliefs by writing the religious texts & codes used by priests and religious leaders. This code uses divine (Godly) authority to support male dominance. "Man is master by divine right; the fear of God will therefore repress any impulse towards revolt in the downtrodden female."
- * Women are deceived by religion into thinking of themselves as equal to men, despite their clear inequality. In some ways women are portrayed by religion as being closer to God than men are. Mothers have a key religious role by introducing their children to religious beliefs.
- * Religion gives women the false belief that they will be compensated for their sufferings on earth by equality in heaven.
- * "There must be religion for women; and there must be women, 'true women', to perpetuate (carry on) religion."

RESEARCH METHOD: No research method used; this was purely theoretical.

WEAKNESSES: lacks any empirical knowledge of how religious women actually feel about religion and why they follow it.



El Saadawi

She wrote

**THE HIDDEN
FACE OF EVE.
1980.**



Discusses female oppression in the Arab world & considers the importance of religion in creating & maintaining oppression.

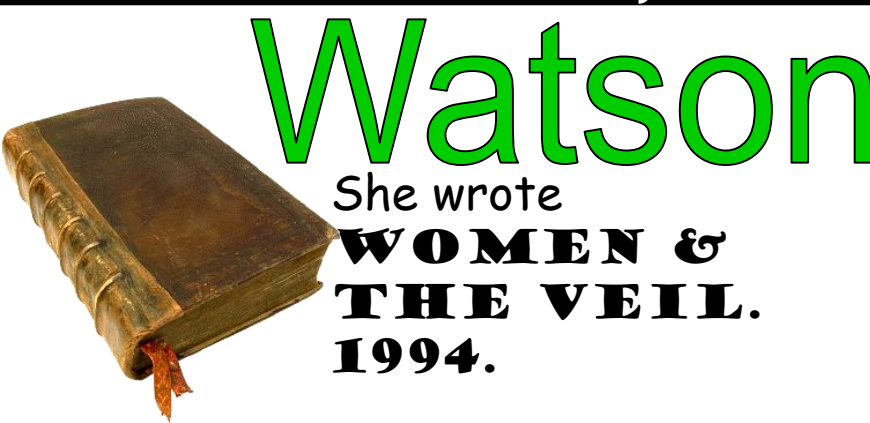
KEY CONCEPTS: patriarchal dominance, female circumcision.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * Arab girls often victims of sexual aggression by men: prostitution, slavery and abortion - evidence of patriarchal dominance. Oppression of women caused by patriarchy. Men distort religion to serve their own interests & legitimise the oppression of women.
- * Religion became **patriarchal** with the misinterpretation of religious beliefs by men and **monotheism**. For example, Eve is depicted as an evil temptress but Saadawi argues the Old Testament shows clearly that she mentally and intellectually superior to Adam.
- * Although the Qur'an said men & women could both be stoned to death for adultery, men were unlikely to be as they were allowed several wives and could divorce their wives instantaneously.
- * She argues **female oppression** is not purely down to religion but to the **patriarchal domination** of religion.

RESEARCH METHOD: she draws on her own life experiences, so this is like an oral history technique. She also draws on the experiences of her friends, relatives and general knowledge of living as a woman in Egypt.

STRENGTHS: offers an Eastern perspective of religion in women's lives, whereas the usual feminist arguments are Western. Shows how Arab women have continued to struggle for their rights and dispels the myth that they are passive.



She argues that veiling of Muslim women can be interpreted as beneficial to them.

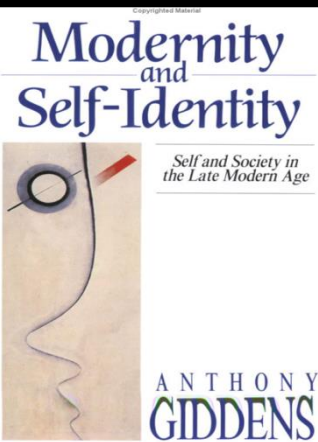
KEY CONCEPTS: veiling, rejection of Western cultural imperialism.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * Her study found veils could be used positively by Muslim women. Nadia, a second generation Islamic woman, chose to wear the veil at 16. She was proud of her religion and wanted others to know she was Muslim. "It's what you say that's important, not what you look like." Wearing a veil made her stand out & avoid "lecherous stares" from men.
- * **Veiling** is often a reaction against sexualised Western culture. Men too, have rejected Western styles of dress in order to show their separate identity. **Veiling** is also a reaction against **secular** (non religious) Western feminism and is an Islamic form of revolt against male oppression and aggression.

RESEARCH METHOD: ethnographic: interviewed three women.

WEAKNESSES: while this study does show that the meaning of religion to its followers needs to be carefully examined, the fact that she only studied three women means it is not generalisable to the rest of the population. She made no attempt to interview women who did feel pushed into wearing the veil and were therefore subject to male control.



Giddens

He wrote
**MODERNITY AND
SELF IDENTITY.
(1991).**



Argues that religion is used by people in high modern society to make sense of their lives.

KEY CONCEPTS: high modernity, reflexivity, separation of time and space, disembedding, existential questions.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * Although modern society was more rational and less traditional, Giddens argues that the conditions of high modern society are right for the resurgence of religion.
- * In **high modern** society there is i) increased **reflexivity**; people analyse their lives in order to improve them & are more willing to change their beliefs & practices. ii) **Separation of time and space**: communications technology means that relationships happen between people living in different parts of the world. iii) **Disembedding** also occurs in a high modern society which means that what happens in a particular place may be shaped by events far away. This all makes it unlikely that religion will survive, but Giddens thinks it will actually resurge.
- * Individuals are more **reflexive**, they make more conscious choices about who they are & what they wish to be. Religion can assist with this it also helps people to make sense of the meaning of life and why we're here. Religion and spirituality can step in to provide moral guidance in a society where the mad, insane & ill are removed out of sight into institutions.
- * Sees fundamentalism as dangerous as it refuses to find the truth through debate or consider it is wrong. In a **globalised** (culturally mixed up) world, different ethnic and religious groups living close to each other are going to have to be more tolerant of each other to avoid serious conflict.

RESEARCH METHOD: purely theoretical.

WEAKNESSES: Beckford argues that it seems contradictory that religion should revive in a society characterized by the use of rational thought to monitor every aspect of life.



Bauman

He wrote

**INTIMATIONS OF
POST
MODERNITY. 1992.**



Argues that religious revival results from the problems people face in post-modern society; they turn to religion for guidance.

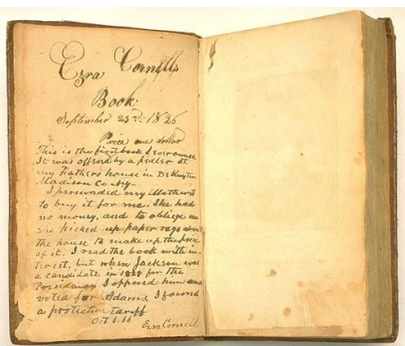
KEY CONCEPTS: 'life projects', reflexivity.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * Agrees with Giddens that increased **reflexivity** (when people are constantly monitoring their lives and how they appear to others), of people causes them to examine the meaning of their lives.
- * Modern society was characterised by abolishing individual responsibility for peoples' own conduct and replacing ethical problems with single laws (think of the temperance movement - banning alcohol).
- * People in post-modern society no longer accept that institutions (such as medicine, the law and education etc), have power over them & they search for their own moral guidance - often through the vast array of religious movements available for their consumption.
- * In post-modern society, individuals are **reflexive** in that they are constantly evaluating themselves and wondering what others think of them. Having a '**life project**' means that people want to be someone that is admired for the way they live their life. So people often turn to experts in morality - religious leaders and gurus, for this guidance. Look at Madonna, she's had more religions than horse whips.

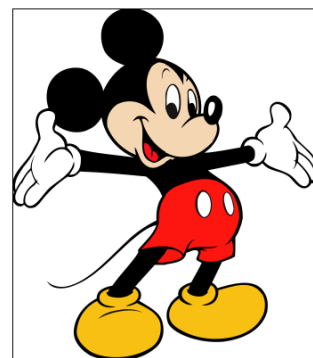
RESEARCH METHOD: like most post-modern work, this is purely theoretical.

WEAKNESSES: Beckford complains that Bauman's work is full of contradictions. If, in post-modern society, people no longer accept the authority of powerful institutions such as the police, education and politics, then why would they go and lap up everything that a religion tells them to believe?



Lyon

He wrote
**JESUS IN
DISNEYLAND.
2000.**



His work examines how religion is adapting to the post-modern world & can be found in many non-traditional settings.

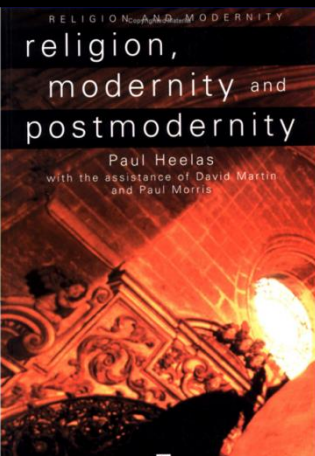
KEY CONCEPTS: sphere of consumption, computer and information technology, religion as a cultural resource, dedifferentiation.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * Lyon identifies two key social changes in the development of post-modern society: 1) spread of **computer & information technology**, such as t'interweb which allows free flow of different religious beliefs & opens up a wider range of possible beliefs for people; 2) growing **consumerism** means "people are free to choose on their own what to do with their time, their homes, their bodies & their gods."
- * Lyon argues religion is not declining, it's relocating to the **sphere of consumption**; it is something that can be bought & tried. In a post-modern world that emphasises choice, people are less willing to accept the authority of a church, but still seek meaning in their lives. Religion can be used sometimes as a source of identity for people.
- * He argues there has been a change from religion as a powerful social institution to a **cultural resource**, from which people will draw guidance when they choose to.
- * Lyon watched a Harvest Day Crusade at Disneyland where there was a Christian band and a preacher. He was struck by how religion is adapting to the post-modern environment. Disneyland is post-modern because it is utterly fake but treated as real (people getting Micky's autograph ... for God's sake). He concludes that religion is no longer confined to traditional settings such as churches but can be found in many different settings. This is an example of **dedifferentiation**; the merging of high and low culture. In his example, the high culture of religion was operating alongside the low culture of Disneyland.

RESEARCH METHOD: purely theoretical but he did draw on a survey of Canadians, of whom 75% did not attend services regularly, but 80% of them still followed religious beliefs and practices when they needed to.

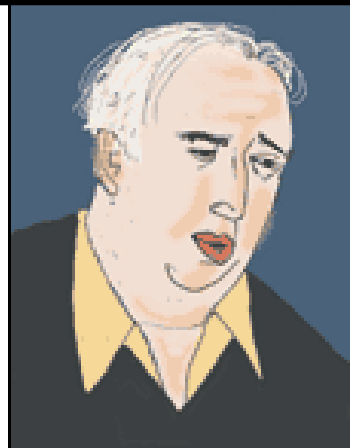
WEAKNESSES: Bruce says Lyon's study is just evidence of secularization; that religion is becoming weaker & has less influence over people's lives. Religion is going to the people; people aren't going to religion.



Heelas

He wrote

**DETRADITIONAL-
ISATION OF
RELIGION & SELF.
1996.**



Heelas examines the claim that the 'New Age' (non-traditional spiritual belief - think *dream catchers*) has post-modern characteristics.

KEY CONCEPTS: 'New Age', *dedifferentiation*, *detraditionalization*, *relativism*, *consumer culture*, *metanarrative*.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

* WHY THE NEW AGE APPEARS POST-MODERN:

- 1) ***Dedifferentiation*** = the New Age seems to involve a breakdown of the distinction between traditional religious beliefs & popular culture; everyone is considered equal in New Age movements.
- 2) ***Detraditionalization*** = it rejects established traditions of conventional religions.
- 3) New Agers can ***consume*** different religious practices from week to week, a bit of yoga here and a bit of primal screaming there...
- 4) The New Age is prepared to accept the beliefs of other groups and therefore rejects the ***metanarratives*** of conventional beliefs.

* WHY THE NEW AGE IS NOT POST-MODERN:

- 1) The New Age does, in fact, have a strong ***metanarrative*** which claims to be able to reveal absolute truths & provide people with the basis for planning their lives.
- 2) Many aspects of New Age religions are not new & are based on ancient sources.

RESEARCH METHOD: again, as post-modernists do, this is purely theoretical.

WEAKNESSES: Does anyone really care if religion is a feature of post-modernity or not? Shouldn't the job of Sociology be to examine current social problems, like destructive fundamentalism and religious conflict??

Religion as a conservative force or a force of change – summary.

1. Marx saw religion as a conservative force which justified the position of the ruling class and provided consolation for the subject class. As a result, it tended to keep the subject class in its place, discouraging social change through revolution.
2. Some Neo-Marxists argue that religion can sometimes help to make the subject class aware of their situation and support their liberation. In this respect, religion can sometimes act as a radical force for social change.
3. Some feminists have argued that religion is a conservative force, seeing it as maintaining patriarchy – keeping women in their traditional place as subordinate to men.
4. In general, functionalists have seen religion as a force for stability rather than change. By reinforcing value consensus and strengthening social solidarity, religion tends to maintain society the way it is.
5. On the basis of his analysis of the relationship between early Protestantism and capitalism, Weber argued that religion can sometimes be a significant force for social change. In his view, early Protestantism provided the means and the guides for action which were an important factor in the rise of capitalism.
6. Some researchers see fundamentalism as a particularly conservative form of religion – it looks backwards at the past for a code for living. It rejects many of the changes in modern society and tries to return to a former time.
7. Despite this, fundamentalism can be seen as a force for change – fundamentalists do try to change society even though their model for change and moral values is based on the past.

Religion as a conservative force or a force of change – summary.

8. There is evidence that religion can act in some circumstances as a conservative force and in others as a radical force.
9. In view of this, some researchers argue that the question should not be: “Is religion a conservative or a radical force?” Instead, it should be “In what circumstances does religion encourage or discourage change?”
10. Meredith McGuire has attempted to answer this last question. She has outlined factors which influence whether religion acts as a force for stability or change.

Weber

The Protestant Ethic
and the Spirit of Capitalism

Weber

He wrote

**THE PROTESTANT
ETHIC AND THE
SPIRIT OF
CAPITALISM. 1904.**



He argues there was a correlation between Calvinist Protestantism & the development of Western industrial capitalism.

KEY CONCEPTS: Protestant ethic, ascetism, calling, the 'elect', 'Spirit of Capitalism', Calvinism.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * Identified a correlation between **Calvinism** and capitalism. Capitalism didn't develop in India or China, despite their advanced technological knowledge because they lacked a religion that encouraged its development. **Calvinism** is a form of Protestantism that thought there was a group of people '**the elect**', predestined by God to go to Heaven but they didn't know if they were '**the elect**' or not. While Lutherans believed that they could affect their chances by their behaviour on earth, Calvinists were left with a psychological problem which they tried to solve by behaving in an exemplary manner in order to confident of a place in Heaven.
- * The Calvinist ethic (way of life) was **ascetic**: denial of pleasure, austere lifestyle & harsh self discipline. Calvinists worked very hard in their **callings** or careers; earning large sums of money was clear evidence that they were worshipping God through hard work. This money was not spent on luxuries, but reinvested in business.
- * Unlike Marx, Weber argued that religion shaped the economy, and not the other way round.

RESEARCH METHOD: Used historical secondary sources to track the development of Calvinism and capitalism.

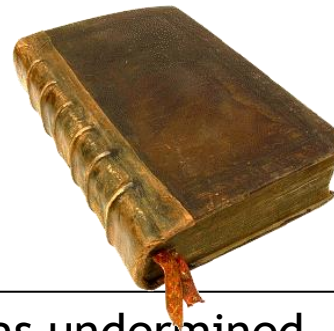
WEAKNESSES: Sombart argues Calvinism was actually against greed and the pursuit of money; some Calvinist countries did not develop capitalism until much later; Kautsky argues early capitalism preceded & largely determined Calvinism; Calvinists dedicated themselves to business because they were not allowed to join particular professions because they were a religious minority, not because their religion dictated it.



GK Nelson

He wrote

**'RELIGION' IN
DEVELOPMENTS
IN SOCIOLOGY.
1986.**



He points to a number of cases where religion has undermined stability or promoted change.

KEY CONCEPTS: Liberation Theology, fundamentalism.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- 1) In Northern Ireland, Roman Catholicism has been long associated with Irish Republicanism in the fight against British rule.
 - 2) In 1960s America, Baptist minister Reverend Martin Luther King was a key figure in the civil rights movement for the black population.
 - 3) Catholic priests in Latin America preached **Liberation Theology** which argued it was the duty of the members to fight against oppressive right-wing dictatorships. They helped to overthrow the government in Nicaragua in 1979.
 - 4) Islamic **fundamentalism** was a key feature of the Iranian revolution in 1979.
 - 5) The Catholic church in Poland supported the Solidarity movement to push for changes in Polish society.
 - 6) Bishop Desmond Tutu was a key figure in the overthrow of apartheid in South Africa & the empowerment of black people there.
- * "Far from encouraging people to accept their place, religion can spearhead resistance and revolution."

RESEARCH METHOD: Just used secondary sources of information; current affairs and modern history.

STRENGTHS: provides contradictory evidence to Marxism, in particular, that religion is always oppressive.

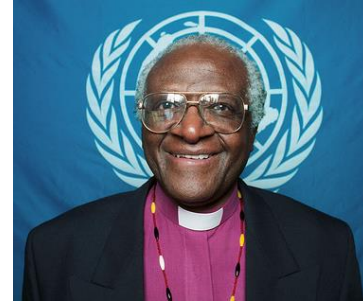
RELIGION
The Social Context
Fifth Edition

Meredith B. McGuire

MacGuire

She wrote

**RELIGION,
THE SOCIAL
CONTEXT. 1981.**



She examines the factors that determine whether or not a religion can act as a radical force for change.

KEY CONCEPTS: beliefs, culture, social location, internal organization.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

* She identifies four key factors that determine if a religion is capable of sparking radical change in a society.

1) **Beliefs:** religions with strict moral codes who are highly critical of the world are more likely to push for change than religions that focus purely on spiritual matters. Islam will have more impact than Buddhism, for example.

2) **Culture:** in highly religious societies, change is more likely if those seeking it use religious arguments to justify their cause as they will be taken more seriously.

3) **Social location:** the part that religion occupies in a society in terms of how important it is. The more important, the more likely that religion can spark change.

4) **Internal organization:** religions with a strong, central source of authority (like The Pope) are more able to directly enter into debate and push for change, (just like Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu did...)

RESEARCH METHOD: Purely theoretical.

STRENGTHS: Although this is a useful development of GK Nelson's work, McGuire's points are rather sketchy and she doesn't substantiate them by drawing on examples.

Item A

The functions of religion are interpreted very differently by sociologists from different perspectives. For instance, most structural theorists, such as Marxists, feminists, functionalists and those from the New Right, argue that in some way religion functions to exert social control over the members of society. However, the different perspectives do not agree on whether such social control is a positive or a negative feature of religion.

Similarly, sociologists disagree about the relationship between religion and social change. For instance, some Marxists, feminists and functionalists argue, in different ways, that religion acts as a force to prevent change, while Max Weber put forward the view that under certain circumstances religion could actively lead to change in society.

Source: adapted from Social Trends 31, Office for National Statistics, January 2000
Crown copyright material is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO
and the Queen's Printer for Scotland.

1. (a) (i) Identify and briefly explain two ways in which religion can act as a conservative force.
(6 marks)
- (ii) Identify and briefly explain **one** way in which religion can act as a force for social change.
(3 marks)
- (b) Using material from **Item A** and elsewhere, briefly examine the evidence and/or arguments in favour of the view that religion can act as a force for change in society.
(18 marks)

2. "Religion can be both a conservative force and an initiator of social change."

To what extent do sociological arguments and evidence support this view of religion?

(33 marks)

1. In their analyses of religious organisations, sociologists have used four main ideal types – church, sect, denomination and cult.
2. Churches and sects are seen as opposite ends of the religious spectrum. Churches are open to all members of society, accept the state and the political and economic systems, are hierarchical and have a professional clergy. Limited demands are made on members and worship is ritualised and restrained. Both churches and sects are likely to claim a monopoly of ‘the truth’.
3. Sects, however, are perceived as unconventional and deviant. They distance themselves from – and are critical of – the wider society. They generally lack a professional clergy and place high demands on members. Worship lacks formal rituals, and emphasises spontaneity.
4. Denominations tend to be seen as conventional and respectable. Unlike churches and sects, they do not claim a monopoly of ‘the truth’. They place fewer demands on their members compared to sects. Denominations are separate from the state (government) and tolerant of the wider society. They have a professional clergy but a less complex hierarchy than a church. Worship is less ritualised than a church but less spontaneous than a sect.
5. Cults, like sects, are often regarded as deviant by the wider society. Unlike sects however, they claim no monopoly of ‘the truth’ and are therefore more tolerant of other religions. Many emphasise an ‘inner divinity’ or ‘power within’, and try to help members to experience and develop it. They make few demands – they simply ask people to be ‘open’ to their teaching.

6. With the emergence in the West of large numbers of new movements that did not fit existing classifications of religious groups, the term New Religious Movements (NRMs) was coined. NRMs mainly draw on Christian or other world faith traditions or Western psychotherapy. Wallis identified world-affirming, world-accommodating and world-rejecting NRMs.
7. The New Age movement is not a religious organisation as such. It is more like a loose network of more-or-less like-minded 'seekers' who dip into a variety of beliefs and practices. Insofar as followers share a common characteristics, it is a quest for spiritual experience and personal growth.
8. It can be argued that New Age spirituality falls short of religion. For example, in many cases there is no evidence of a supernatural power.
9. The following explanations have been put forward for the origin of sects:
 - Social marginality – sects tend to recruit those on the margins of society. Their new status as the 'chosen few' provided by a theodicy of disprivilege can bring self-respect and hope for the future.
 - Relative deprivation – sects can provide a sense of community, mutual support and self-respect. The self-discipline and the self-denial demanded by many sects can improve people's material situation.
 - Social dislocation – this can result in anomie (a sense of normlessness or social disorder, no one knows what's going on). Sects, with their clearly defined belief systems and strict moral codes, can provide certainty and direction.

10. Circumstances which can lead to anomie include:

- Natural or man-made disasters;
- Contact with, or colonisation by, a powerful alien (foreign and very different) culture;
- The process of industrialisation and modernisation.

11. Wallis sees NRMs resulting from the processes of rationalisation and desacrilisation. He sees world-rejecting NRMs during the 1960s and 1970s as a response to the failure of young people to change society by protest and alternative lifestyles. He sees world-affirming NRMs as a response to the values of capitalist society – as a means of realising them or as compensation for the price paid for living up to them.

12. Some sociologists have seen the New Age movement with its emphasis on individualism, relativism and choice and consumption as a reflection of late modernity, while others have seen it as a reflection of postmodernity.

13. According to Heelas and Woodhead, the increasing emphasis on subjective-life, as opposed to life-as, accounts for the growth of New Age spirituality.

14. Niebuhr argued that sects are short-lived – they must develop into denominations or die.

15. But some sects survive – as established sects. They often do so by isolating themselves from the outside world.

16. According to Bryan Wilson, conversionist sects are likely to develop into denominations because they can still save soul in this form. Adventist sects cannot become denominations, because only membership of the sect will guarantee them a place in the new world order.

17. Wallis sees two main routes for world-rejecting NRMs. First, they can develop into either world-accommodating or world-affirming NRMs. Or second, they can turn further inwards and increase their isolation from the wider society.
18. Wallis argues that the survival and development of world-affirming NRMs depends on the demand for the services they offer. To flourish and successfully grow, they must respond to new demands.

Ernst Troeltsch

*The
Social
Teaching
of the
Christian
Churches*

Volume I

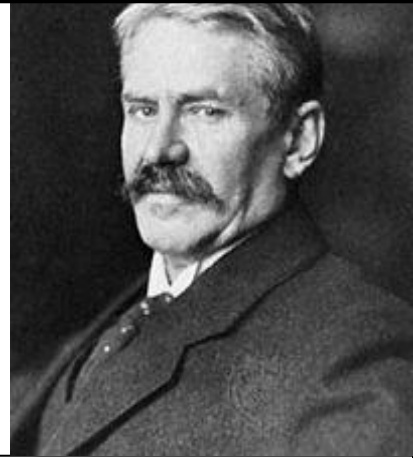
Foreword by James Luther Adams



Troeltsch

He wrote

**THE SOCIAL
TEACHING OF
THE CHRISTIAN
CHURCHES.**



He was one of the first Sociologists to distinguish between different religion organizations; churches and sects.

KEY CONCEPTS: churches, sects, monopoly of religious truth.

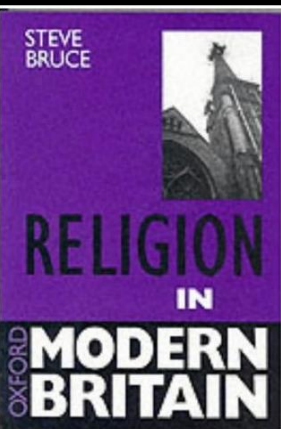
SUMMARY OF THEORY:

* He identified the following characteristics of **churches**: 1) large religious organization; 2) members don't have to demonstrate their faith, they are usually baptised into it when they're too young to understand; 3) members drawn from all classes but upper classes most likely to join as the church "stabilizes & determines the political order"; 4) closely related to the state (Queen is Head of State and Head of the C of E); 5) has conservative ideas & supports the status quo (the way society operates); 6) has a **monopoly of religious truth** - won't accept challenges to its beliefs; 7) has a paid hierarchy of officials.

* **Sects** are: 1) smaller; 2) sects closely "connected with lower classes ... those opposed to the State and society"; 3) are in opposition to the world (won't own property or fight in wars); 4) members may be expected to withdraw from public life outside the sect; 5) members deeply committed to sect's beliefs; 6) members must join voluntarily as adults & willingly adopt beliefs, sacrificing 'worldly pleasures' like alcohol - stronger control over individual's lives; 7) also have a **monopoly of religious truth** & 8) don't have paid officials.

RESEARCH METHOD: theoretical, using secondary sources.

WEAKNESSES: his classification is not capable to describing the variety of religions in the USA or modern Britain. Also fails to examine or distinguish cults, denominations or the vast variety of New Religious Movements. Bruce argues religious pluralism (variety) undermines the church type of organization because it becomes more difficult for the State to support just one religion. So Troeltsch's definition can only apply to pre-modern Christian societies when we had one church in Britain.



Bruce

He wrote

**RELIGION IN
MODERN
BRITAIN. 1995.**



Examines some of the reasons for the growth in popularity of New Religious Movements - and is particularly scathing!

KEY CONCEPTS: individualism, relativism.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * Argues that NRMs are a product of modernity & appeals most to affluent, 'university-educated middle classes working in the "expressive professions": social workers, counsellors, actors, writers, artists & others whose education & work causes them to have an articulate interest in human potential.'
- * Views & beliefs of the individual are more important in modern, egalitarian (equal) societies & this has bred **individualism**.
- * He points out that many aspect of the New Age draw heavily upon Eastern religions, such as Hinduism, but comments that to 'sell' them to the West, they have been stripped of the need for self-discipline. He says that in Western, materialist societies, few would be prepared to make heavy sacrifices in pursuit of spirituality, nor are individuals prepared to accept their own insignificance.
- * Bruce says the New Age interpretation of Eastern religion appeals because it: "flatters the arrogance of the Westerner. Or to put it another way, though it talks of empowerment, it requires as an entry price a certain degree of self-confidence, a belief that one is already rather splendid. At the very least you have to believe that you have a self that people should want to hear you talk about endlessly."
- * He argues the New Age is a symptom of extreme **relativism** where what you believe comes to depend on your own point of view & not the acceptance of definite claims of truth by scientists or religious leaders.

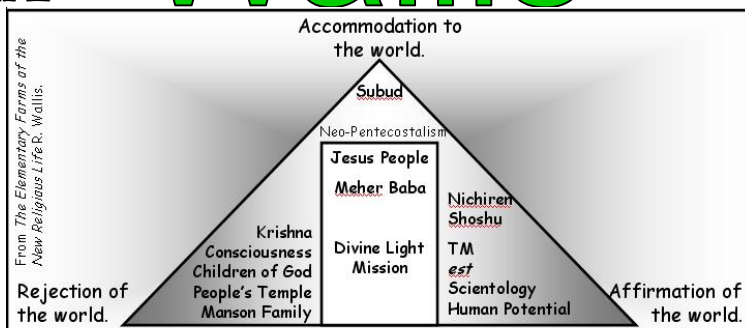
RESEARCH METHOD: theoretical.

WEAKNESSES: should carry out empirical research to understand why individuals do join New Religious Movements. Rather biased.



He wrote
**THE
ELEMENTARY
FORMS OF
THE NEW
RELIGIOUS
LIFE. 1984.**

Wallis



He wanted to understand developments in New Religious Movements in the mid to late 20th century by dividing them into three main groups.

KEY CONCEPTS: New Religious Movements, World Affirming, World Accommodating, World Rejecting, 'middle ground'.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * **World rejecting NRMs** have: 1) a definite idea of a god; 2) highly critical of the world & seek to change it; 3) members break away from their lives & are controlled (brainwashing); 4) limited contact with world for fundraising; 5) leaders may be in contact with outside to bring about change; 6) morally strict; 7) vary in size; 8) communal. Wallis argues these are sects as their doctrines are deviant.
- * **World accommodating NRMs** are usually off-shoots of a church which simply live with the world as it is & are concerned with religious rather than world questions. Their beliefs may help them cope with their worldly roles. They want to restore spiritual purity to established religions (like Pentecostals with the Holy Spirit).
- * **World affirming NRMs** claim to provide access to spiritual or supernatural powers to realise one's full potential & success in life. Inclusive; seeking as wide a membership as possible. They try to sell members a service and exert little control over members' lives.
- * Acknowledge a '**middle ground**' as not all religious organisations will conform to a particular category.

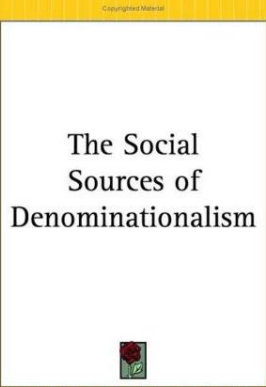
RESEARCH METHOD: purely theoretical using secondary sources.

WEAKNESSES: Beckford praises Wallis for recognizing that not all religions can fit neatly into a category but criticizes him for not paying enough attention to the diversity of views that often exist within a sect or a cult.

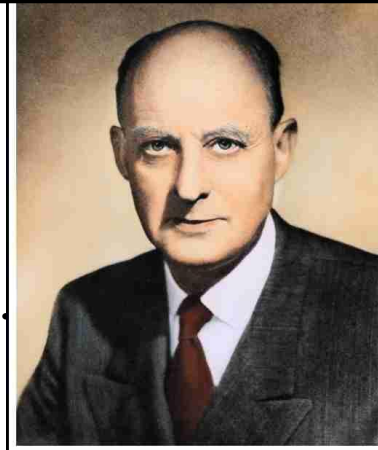
Niebuhr

He wrote

**THE SOCIAL
SOURCES OF
DENOMINATIONALISM.
1929.**



H. Richard Niebuhr



He was the first Sociologist to differentiate between denominations and churches.

KEY CONCEPTS: denominations.

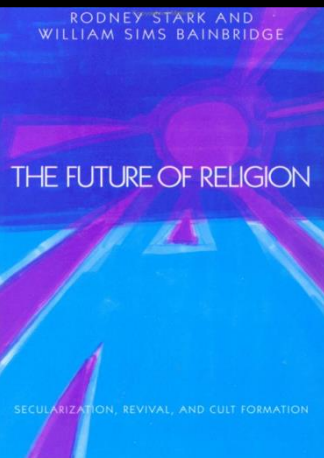
SUMMARY OF THEORY:

* Identified the following characteristics of denominations in relation to churches:

- 1) **denominations** don't have universal appeal in society; 2005 English Church Census found 289,400 Methodists; 287,600 Pentecostalists and 254,800 Baptists;
- 2) they draw members from all social classes but are less associated with the upper classes (unlike churches). In the USA, there is no established church, just a lot of denominations;
- 3) they don't identify closely with the State and approves of the separation of the church and State;
- 4) don't claim a **monopoly of religious truth**; prepared to tolerate and co-operate with other religions;
- 5) usually conservative and accept the norms and values of society while placing minor restrictions on members' behaviour such as not drinking alcohol or gambling;
- 6) have many of the same characteristics as churches; new members freely admitted and have a hierarchy of paid officials.

RESEARCH METHOD: completely theoretical, using secondary sources to gather information about forms of worship.

WEAKNESSES: Aldridge argues that in some societies one denomination (such as Scientology) may be seen as totally acceptable (in the US) while in others be seen as deviant (UK). There is no clear agreement about which religions are sects & which are denominations.



Stark & Bainbridge

They wrote
**THE FUTURE OF
RELIGION.
1985.**



Because most religious organisations are exceptions to the rule, they argue the typologies of church, denomination, sect & cult don't really work.

KEY CONCEPTS: un-ideal types, audience cults, client cults, cult movements.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

* **Ideal types** of religious organisations should be abandoned because they are too rigid and not all religious bodies fit into them neatly.

* They argue that sects are offshoots of religions, often following schism (or split), such as between Protestantism and Catholicism.

* Cults are new religions to a particular society, often brought in as a result of importation (brought in from another country). They argue there are three broad types of cults:

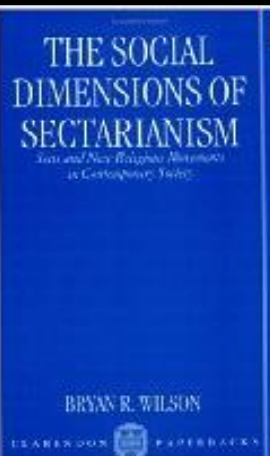
1) **Audience cults** = involve little face-to-face contact & are organised through the use of mass media.

2) **Client cults** = offer services to their members; Scientology offers clients stress relief while the Reich Foundation offers its members the 'monumental orgasm'.

3) **Cult movements** = involve followers far more, membership of other faiths is forbidden & they involve most aspects of members' lives. E.g. Heaven's Gate and the Moonies.

RESEARCH METHOD: purely theoretical review of sociological categorizations of religious organisations.

WEAKNESSES: Bless them. They slag off other Sociologists for forcing religious organisations into 'un-ideal types' and then set about putting cults into categories.



Wilson

He wrote

**RELIGION IN A
SECULAR
SOCIETY.
1966.**



Argued that sects, cults and NRMs grow because of social change & that some survive for a long time without developing into denominations.

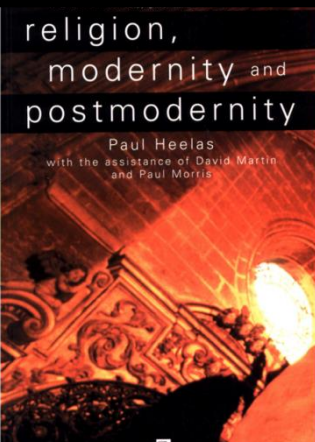
KEY CONCEPTS: *conversionist sect, evangelical sects, Adventist sects.*

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * Argued sects arise during periods of rapid social change, e.g. the spread of Methodism in 19th century was a working class response to the 'chaos & uncertainty of life in the newly settled industrial areas.'
- * Rejected Niebuhr's belief that sects were short-lived, arguing that some sects did survive for a long time without becoming bigger denominations. The crucial factor was how the sect planned to achieve **salvation**. He argues sects can be classified according to how they answer the question of "What shall we do to be saved?"
- * Only **conversionist sects** are likely to develop into denominations such as the **evangelical sects** in the US as they try to recruit as many members as possible in order to save them from evil.
- * **Adventist sects** are founded on the principle of separation from the world in the expectation of the Second Coming. To become a denomination they would have to change this basic premise. Separation from the world and denominationalism are not compatible because they exclude most people (Jehovah's Witnesses).
- * Many sects have survived as sects for a long time: Quakers, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons etc because they recruit their own children. However, education and globalisation threaten to tempt these children away.

RESEARCH METHOD: *purely theoretical.*

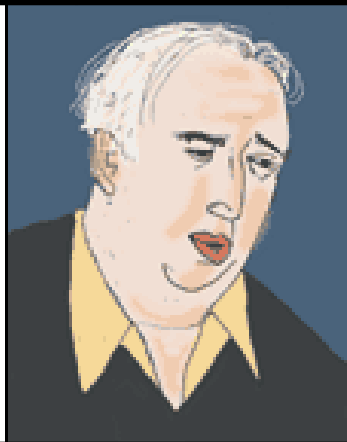
STRENGTHS: *examines the core beliefs of religious organisations to evaluate whether they have a chance of survival.*



Heelas

He wrote

**RELIGION,
MODERNITY &
POST
MODERNITY. 1998.**



Examines the New Age both in terms of its central themes and the different types of New Age movements.

KEY CONCEPTS: holistic milieu, congregational domain, self-spirituality, detraditionalization, outer world, inner world, best of both worlds.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * New Age ideas are spread through films, shops, seminars, meetings, music, TV and so on, this environment is the **holistic milieu** which is totally different to the **congregational domain** of traditional religion where people regularly attend places of collective worship. The New Age includes clairvoyance, aliens, spirit guides, meditation, paganism, tarot ... Hebden Bridge, basically.
- * Heelas argues the central feature of the New Age is a belief in **self - spirituality** where members have turned away from traditional religion to seek the answers in themselves. Salvation does not come from acceptance from an external god; it comes from discovering and perfecting oneself. So **detraditionalization** is also a key feature.
- * Heelas identifies variations in New Age beliefs. World- affirming aspects of the New Age stress how to experience the best of the **outer world** (being successful in business). World rejecting aspects of the New Age emphasise the **inner world**, inner spirituality & turn away from worldly concerns. Most New Age offer the **best of both worlds** offering both success and spiritual fulfilment.
- * Examined four ways in which the New Age may appeal to modern lives; i) people have many roles (work, family, friends, consumerism) & may need to use the New Age as a way of finding an identity; ii) consumer culture creates a 'climate of discontent' as people search for ways to be perfect (clothes, cosmetics, religion...); iii) rapid social change can destabilise people and disrupt traditional norms and values, NRMs help people find certainty and security; iv) decline of conventional religion leaves people without spiritual alternatives to find solutions to the problems of modern life - this is where NRMs can step in.

RESEARCH METHOD: review of New Age religions.

STRENGTHS: any analysis of the New Age challenges Weber's belief that the modern world would become more rational. It also highlights the individualism of post-modern life. I mean: aliens...?!
53

Item A

Sects are often comparatively small organisations; they usually aim at discovering and following ‘the true way’, and some withdraw from the surrounding society into communities of their own. Members of sects often regard the established churches as corrupt. Most sects have few or no officials, and all members are regarded as equal participants.

Cults resemble sects, but differ in some ways. They are the most loosely-knit of religious organisations and are often short-lived. They are composed of individuals who reject what they see as the values of the outside world, and their focus is on individual spiritual experience. Like sects, cults often form around an inspirational leader.

Source: adapted from A GIDDENS, *Sociology* (5th edition), Polity Press, 2006.

1. (a) Identify and briefly explain **three** reasons why membership of sects may be short-lived.

(6 marks)

(b) Using material from **Item A** and elsewhere, examine the view that cults and sects have taken the place of established churches as the most important religious and spiritual movements in society today.

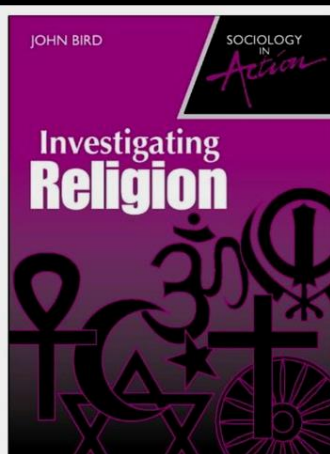
(10 marks)

2. Evaluate the view that cults and sects are replacing traditional religions as the means for experiencing and expressing religious belief in the world today.

(20 marks)

3. Assess the view that social change is the main reason why individuals may join New Religious Movements.

(20 marks)



Bird

He wrote
**INVESTIGATING
RELIGION.
1999.**



Explains why ethnic minorities in modern Britain have higher levels of religiosity.

KEY CONCEPTS: religiosity, community solidarity.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

* Bird identified five reasons why ethnic minorities may have higher levels of **religiosity** in British society:

- 1) Many ethnic minorities come from societies that are very religious.
- 2) In a minority group, religion can 'act as a basis for **community solidarity**' & give a feeling of strength & belonging. It may give new migrants 'a point of contact in a new country, a source of marriage partners, social welfare and so on.'
- 3) 'Maintaining a religious commitment is also a way to maintain other aspects of cultural identity such as language, art, patterns of marriage, cooking and so on.'
- 4) Socialization means 'there is often a strong family pressure to maintain religious commitment'.
- 5) As many disadvantaged ethnic groups are working class, strong religious beliefs may help ethnic minorities cope with oppression. Pentecostalism had a dual function for British Afro-Caribbean's; it helped them adjust to discrimination and injustice & it helped to improve their social & economic position.

RESEARCH METHOD: theoretical, but he did draw on ethnographic research carried out by Ken Pryce in Bristol in 1979.

WEAKNESSES: it doesn't really explain why second and third generation immigrants have higher levels of religiosity. It also doesn't acknowledge political influences on religiosity as demonstrated by the higher number of Islamic women wearing the veil.



Chryssides

He wrote
1994.



Examines how the religions of immigrant groups and their descendants have had three paths open to them.

KEY CONCEPTS: apostasy, accommodation, renewed vigour.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

* The religions of immigrant, minority groups in Britain have had three possible outcomes:

1) **Apostasy** means that they could have abandoned their religion due to hostility from the host society. An example cited by Chryssides was that of a Sikh called Moris Cerello who converted to Christianity & turned his back on Sikhism.

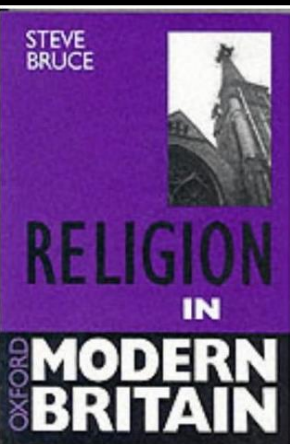
2) **Accommodation** is where religious beliefs and practices take on aspects of the dominant British culture, for example, an Sikh who removes his turban because he thinks it will improve his chances of getting a job.

3) With **renewed vigour**, religion is practiced more enthusiastically and strongly in response to the actual or perceived hostility towards it from the host society.

* Chryssides argues most minority ethnic religions have been characterised by **accommodation** & **renewed vigour**. Many buildings have been bought and converted into mosques & temples, while many Muslim women still manage to dress modestly while incorporating Western fashion. Marriage ceremonies also take account of British legal requirements.

RESEARCH METHOD: Carried out interviews with ethnic minority individuals with varying levels of religiosity.

STRENGTHS: ethnographic method which allows ethnic minority religious communities to tell Sociology what the real story is.



Bruce

He wrote

**RELIGION IN
MODERN
BRITAIN.
1995.**



Argues ethnic minorities are more likely to be religious in modern British society but that this is largely for social reasons.

KEY CONCEPTS: cultural defence, cultural transition.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * Bruce argues that the fact that religion is so buoyant & important in ethnic minority communities is largely a response to the social situation of minority ethnic groups.
- * It's not really an expression of deep religious commitment.
- * He sees the strength of minority ethnic religions as caused by either:

CULTURAL DEFENCE: where an ethnic minority group practices their religion with enthusiasm and commitment to show ethnic pride in their origins and their community as well as maintaining a sense of identity.

CULTURAL TRANSITION: where an ethnic group uses religion to cope with the upheaval of migration.

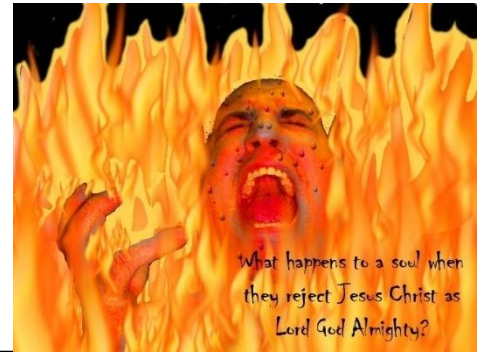
- * Bruce believes that over time, ethnic groups in Britain will become more integrated and are increasingly influenced by the wider secular society. As a consequence, religious beliefs will decline.

RESEARCH METHOD: theoretical.

WEAKNESSES: 'Living Apart; Together' by Munira Mirza et al found that, if anything, British born Muslims were more committed to Islam than their older, first generation relatives. Many younger Muslims were more likely to agree with the integration of Shariah Law into British society, than their older relatives.

Miller & Hoffman

They wrote the article
**RISK &
RELIGION.**
1995.



What happens to a soul when
they reject Jesus Christ as
Lord God Almighty?

Women's greater concern about going to hell, alongside their socialization into obedience & their roles as child carers & homemakers all combine to make them more religious.

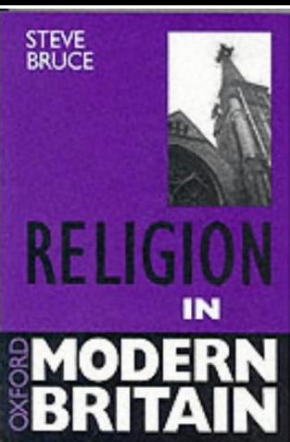
KEY CONCEPTS: differential socialization, structural locations, risk.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- 1) **Differential socialization** means that "females are taught to be more submissive, passive and obedient and nurturing than are males and these attributes are associated with higher levels of religiosity." American research suggests men who are submissive, passive, obedient & nurturing tend to be more religious than men who aren't.
- 2) Differences result from social and **structural locations**; women are less likely to work so they have more time for religion, they lack the identity that a career can give them so seek one through religion & their role in socializing children through taking them to church is part of the female childrearing role.
- 3) Women are more scared of risking hell if they don't believe in God. Men are less **risk** averse than women & are more likely to take the gamble with their afterlife.

RESEARCH METHOD: reviewing the research of other sociologists and findings of survey research.

WEAKNESSES: It's difficult to combine and control data from research that hasn't been conducted personally. How do they know that the research methods employed were valid and reliable?



Bruce

He wrote
**RELIGION IN
MODERN
BRITAIN.
1995.**



Argues feminine values are similar to religious values & this partly accounts for their greater religiosity.

KEY CONCEPTS: public sphere, private sphere.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * Religious values are similar to feminine values as women are "less confrontational, less aggressive, less goal orientated, less domineering, more co-operative & more caring." Women are attracted particularly to the "healing, channelling and spirituality" of the New Age as it's more in keeping with female gender roles.
- * According to Bruce, there is a clear division in the modern world between the **public sphere** of paid work, politics etc and the **private sphere** of the home, family and personal life. As a result of secularization, religion is less important in the **public sphere** and is more confined to the **private sphere**. As women are more concerned with this **private sphere** than men, women have tended to be more religious than men.
- * The type of religion that women follow also has a lot to do with class. Working class women tend to retain a belief in a powerful God or forces beyond their control, such as fortune-telling and superstition. Middle class women, however, are more into controlling and improving their own lives and this is why they're attracted to the New Age.

RESEARCH METHOD: theoretical.

WEAKNESSES: This needs backing up with empirical research to find out the experiences of women who do practice religious belief.



Woodhead

She wrote the article
**GENDERING
SECULARISATION
THEORY.**



She argues there is a spiritual revolution involving women more than men for a number of reasons.

KEY CONCEPTS: primary institutions, secondary institutions, individual sphere.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * The world of work became more rationalized from the 19th century onwards (Weber) & this largely affected men & left little room for religion. The housewife role became increasingly important for women & this isolated them from the effects of rationalization so were not as likely to become as disillusioned with religion as men.
- * Churches became more feminised, emphasising love, care and relationships. Male church-going declined, women's didn't as religion became even less appealing to men.
- * Women are still more interested in religion than men because:
 - 1) women are still less involved in the public world of work than men.
 - 2) There are three spheres: **primary institutions** (work and politics); **secondary institutions** (caring for others; family & religion) & the **individual sphere** where people are more concerned with their own freedom and individualism.
 - 3) New Age beliefs are dominated by women because the spirituality of this 'holistic milieu' offers the promise of discovering a true self, beyond home and work, in which their identities revolve around domestic labour & their position through their job & responsibilities.

RESEARCH METHOD: theoretical.

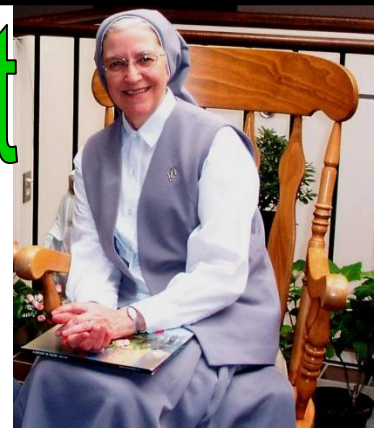
STRENGTHS: Woodhead's work is more developed than that of other writers on this topic & adds significantly to the understanding of secularization as well as gender differences in religiosity.



Voas & Crockett

They wrote
2005.

Yes, three t's!



They examined the British Social Attitudes Survey & found three possible explanations for lack of religiosity amongst the young.

KEY CONCEPTS: period effect, secularization.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- 1) Age - people tend to get more religious as they get older and closer to death. People also may return to active involvement when they have children because they think it's important for their socialization.
 - 2) Differences may be due to a **period effect**; those born in a particular period of time (a cohort), might be particularly likely or unlikely to be religious because of specific events or social changes in the era when they were growing up. (How might 9/11 have affected American children?)
 - 3) Could be due to progressive decline of religion (**secularization**) so that each generation is less religious than the previous one.
- * They found little evidence that people became more religious over time or that it was specific cohorts of people that were becoming less religious. "Change has occurred because each generation has entered adulthood less religious than its predecessors." This was partly because each generation was less likely to socialize their children into religious beliefs than the previous generation. (Is this anything to do with time, more parents working full time?)

RESEARCH METHOD: used data from the British Social Attitudes Survey & applied their own theories to explain the patterns they found.

WEAKNESSES: their findings may not apply to all types of religious & spiritual belief. Living Apart; Together' by Munira Mirza et al found that, if anything, British born Muslims were more committed to Islam than their older, first generation relatives. Many younger Muslims were more likely to agree with the integration of Shariah Law into British society, than their older relatives.

Item A

For some people, religion is an important part of their lives. It can provide contact with others as well as participation in the local community. However, in 1999, almost half of all adults aged 18 and over in Great Britain who said they belonged to a religion or were brought up in a religion claimed that they never or practically attended a religious service. Only 13% of women and 10% of men attended a religious service at least once a week.

Religion clearly plays a more important role in the lives of older people than in those of younger people. In 1999, one in six people aged 65 and over who said they belonged to a religious organisation or were brought up in a religion, attended one or more services a week. This compared with one in 20 of those aged 18-24 year olds said that they had no religion, whereas only 2% of those aged 65 and over claimed this was the case.

Source: adapted from Social Trends 31, Office for National Statistics, January 2000
Crown copyright material is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO
and the Queen's Printer for Scotland.

1. (a) (i) Identify and briefly explain **two** reasons why women seem to have a higher participation rate in religion than that of men. *(6 marks)*

(ii) Identify and briefly explain **one** reason why people from some ethnic minorities seem to have a higher participation rate in religion than other social group. *(3 marks)*
- (b) Using material from **Item A** and elsewhere, assess the reasons why young people seem to participate in religious activity far less than do older generations. *(18 marks)*
2. Assess the view that, for ethnic minority groups, the practice of religion and membership of religious groups is mainly a form of cultural defence. *(33 marks)*
3. Assess the view that new religious movements are mainly for the middle classes and the young. *(33 marks)*

1. There are two main versions of the secularisation thesis – the disappearance thesis and the differentiation thesis. (A big set of ideas that argues that religion has disappeared altogether and a big set of ideas that argues that religion is just changing).
2. Sharon Hanson makes a distinction between secularisation on the level of the social system (the Broad Approach) and on the level of the individual (Narrow Approach).
3. Secularisation theorists claim that the power and influence of religious institutions, religious beliefs and religious practices have all declined.
4. They accept that religion may continue on an individual level – as privatised religion. However, they take the Broad Approach, arguing that religion is losing its significance on the level of the social system.
5. The evidence for secularisation has been questioned in the following ways:
 - Are the measurements of religious beliefs and practices valid – true and accurate?
 - If privatised religion remains widespread, is it reasonable to claim that secularisation is occurring?
 - Is the comparison of a 'golden age' of religion in the past with a secular present justified?
 - Does the rise of the New Age movement and high levels of religious belief and church attendance in the USA provide evidence against the secularisation thesis?

6. Sociological theories offer the following views of secularisation:

- Karl Marx believed that religion will disappear with the overthrow of the capitalist system.
- Max Weber argued that rationalisation is steadily eroding religion on both an individual and a societal level.
- Peter Berger claimed that the authority of all religions is weakened as they compete for clients in the religious marketplace. How can their competing and contradictory beliefs all be seen as true?
- Bryan Wilson gave the following reasons for the decline of religion on a societal level – social differentiation, rational thinking and science, and the decline of community.
- Emile Durkheim argued that the rapid social changes brought about by industrialisation and urbanisation and the resulting anomie led to decline of religion. He did not see this as an irreversible trend – societies must have sacred symbols and communal rituals if they are to survive. *So what can we argue that football is a religion, then?*
- Some postmodernists argue that the loss of confidence in metanarratives has led to a decline in traditional religion. This produces a 'crisis of meaning'. However, they see new types of religion offering to restore meaning.

7. The Kendal Project indicated that the New Age spiritual revolution had not taken place. However, it suggested that if present trends continue, then the revolution will take place in 20 to 30 years.

8. Evidence on religious belief and attendance at religious institutions in the USA has been used to question the secularisation thesis. Even allowing for problems of measurement, attendance levels are high compared to Europe.
9. Will Herberg argues that religious institutions in the USA have retained support by becoming more secular.
10. In view of the different definitions of religion and secularisation and the problems of measurement, it is difficult to reach firm conclusions about the secularisation thesis.

Marx, Comte, Durkheim & Weber.



These four classic social theorists all agreed that religion would eventually decline and that secularization would occur.

KEY CONCEPTS: rationalization.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

• Durkheim argued that it is inevitable that religion will lose some function as an integrating force in modern society as it evolves. **Social solidarity** will increasingly be provided by education. Because people are being integrated by education there is less need for religious participation = **secularization**.

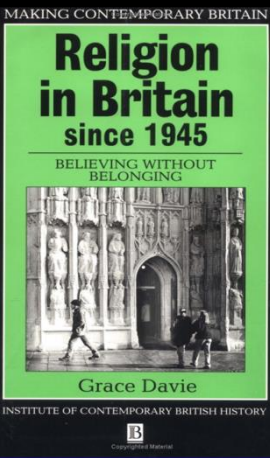
* Comte argued that Society has passed through three **ideological stages**: **THEOLOGICAL** where religion provided the answers and justified the social order, **METAPHYSICAL** where philosophy began to search for the 'truth' and then **POSITIVE** where science now provides the answers to our questions of existence. Hence religious ideas are insignificant.

* Weber believed that as modern industrial society developed into capitalism it will become more underpinned by an ideology of **rationalization**. People will act in terms of rational goals rather than emotional, traditional or collectivist motives. Religion is not rational and will therefore lose significance.

* Marx argued industrial capitalism would be a catalyst which would eradicate religion. The revolution of the proletariat would create a classless society meaning that an ideology to legitimate social inequality = religion, would no longer be necessary. Hence **secularization**: religion loses social significance.

RESEARCH METHOD: purely theoretical.

WEAKNESSES: outdated!! Not applicable to modern society.



Davie

She wrote

**RELIGION IN BRITAIN
SINCE 1945: BELIEVING
WITHOUT BELONGING.
1994.**



Davies argues that there has been a change from forms of religion that are *inherited* to forms of religion that are *chosen*.

KEY CONCEPTS: inherited religion, chosen religion, believing, belonging.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

* Davies argues that there is a complex relationship between religious belief & religious belonging that is overlooked in the secularization debate.

* She says that although there is a marked reduction in the involvement of religion in public life & membership, people still continue to believe, particularly at times of national tragedy. (Look at the reaction to the death of Diana, Princess of Wales and 9/11). In this way, religion meets the public need for collective grieving.

* Davies draws three conclusions from her research:

1) Religion can't influence decision making by the individual or society.

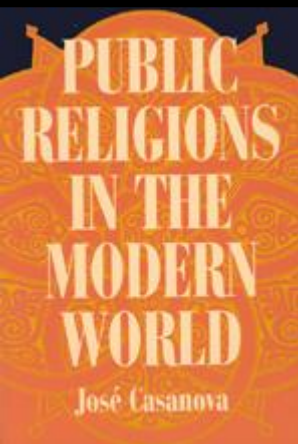
2) Inherited forms of religion are increasingly a private, not public, matter.

3) BUT - it's too early to predict the end of European churches as new forms of religion may still emerge (NRMs, sects and so on).

* In a later book, Davies argued that Europe is an 'exceptional case' where secularization does seem to be happening. On the other hand, Christianity is thriving in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America & the USA.

RESEARCH METHOD:

WEAKNESSES:



Casanova

He wrote

**PUBLIC
RELIGIONS IN
THE MODERN
WORLD. 1994.**



He distinguishes three aspects of secularization & argues that religion has not faded away from public life.

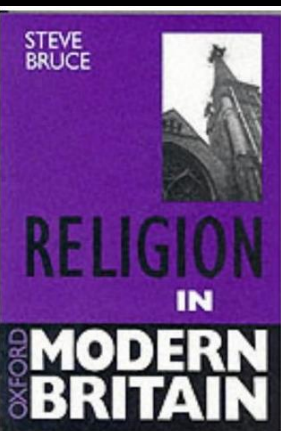
KEY CONCEPTS: differentiation, decline of religion beliefs, privatization, deprivatization.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- 1) Casanova believes secularization starts with **differentiation** where the state, politics and the economy become separate from religion.
 - 2) Another aspect of secularization is the **decline of religious beliefs** and practices when fewer people take part in religious activities or believe in God.
 - 3) **Privatization** is another aspect of secularization and refers to the way in which religion stops playing any part in public or political life & no longer influences how politicians make decisions or how individuals in society chose to live their lives.
- * Casanova argues that religious beliefs and practices are not dying out, and that 'public relations' have increasingly re-entered the public sphere.
 - * Although religion is no longer as central and important to the state it is has not faded away and still has a part to play.
 - * BUT in other countries across the world, Casanova argues that **deprivatization** is taking place where religion is becoming more active in public and political affairs. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-15808922> Bishops sign open letter criticising welfare reform.

RESEARCH METHOD: Theoretical.

WEAKNESSES: as with all theoretical works, this could do with some empirical support, drawing on events in recent history to illustrate and substantiate the concepts he uses.



Bruce

He wrote

**RELIGION IN
MODERN
BRITAIN. 1995.**



Argues opinion poll data shows weakening of religious beliefs. Some are moving to NRMs but such vague beliefs have little cultural influence & hardly affect people's behaviour.

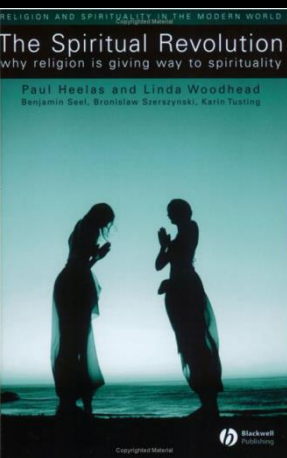
KEY CONCEPTS: social differentiation, societalization, social fragmentation, strong religion, weak religion.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * Churches are more distant from the state now which has freed them up to be more critical of the government (e.g. CND).
- * Agrees with Parsons, **social differentiation** means religion performs fewer functions particularly as modern world is more rational.
- * **Societalization** means social life has become more **fragmented** and is no longer locally based around communities, like it used to be. Bruce argues the decline of community undermines religion in three ways:
 - 1) without strong sense of community, churches can no longer serve as a focal point for communities;
 - 2) people's greater involvement with broader society (work etc), means they're less likely to turn to their vicar for support;
 - 3) cultural diversity means people hold their beliefs with less certainty as they have been influenced by other religions.
- * **Strong religion** which dominates people's lives, can't be widespread in **fragmented society** while **weak religion** is more suited to **fragmented societies** where there is an acceptance that there may be more than one way to spiritual truth.
- * Doesn't accept that NRMs are soaking up people leaving churches as there are too few of them. Bruce believes secularization is still definitely happening in modern British society.

RESEARCH METHOD: theoretical - drawing upon survey data.

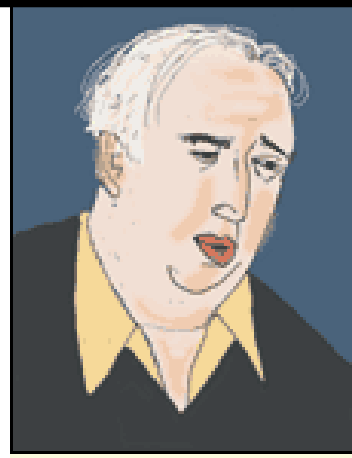
WEAKNESSES: again, empirical data would allow him to operationalize his concepts with real people to see if they're really happening.



The Kendal Project

Heelas et al wrote

**THE SPIRITUAL
REVOLUTION: WHY
RELIGION IS GIVING
WAY TO
SPIRITUALITY.
2005.**



This was an empirical study carried out in Kendal, Cumbria which found less people attending church, but more people becoming involved in the New Age & alternative spirituality.

KEY CONCEPTS: secularization, congregational domain, sacrilization, holistic milieu.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- They categorized conventional, 'normal' religious congregations into three types of worshipper: 1) those that focused on people living their own individual, unique lives; 2) those that emphasized living their own unique lives but with clear guidelines on behaviour and 3) those that 'pay little or no attention to unique lives, and require them to be sacrificed on the altar of a higher good' - in other words, they look to God for guidance and will obey Him, not their own spirit.
- * The first type of group were most likely to become involved in New Age religions whilst the last group were most likely to remain in the bosom of the traditional church where teachings of the religion are expected to be obeyed with no question.
- * The New Age was growing while the traditional religions were shrinking. This led the team to conclude that **secularization** was happening in the **congregational domain** at the same time as **sacrilization** (increased emphasis on the sacred) was taking place in the **holistic milieu**.

RESEARCH METHOD: Between 2000-2001, a 'body count' of attendees at religious ceremonies was carried out, along with interviews, a street survey and ethnography.

STRENGTHS: this study has a lot of validity as it involved strategic primary research.



Wilson

He wrote

**RELIGION IN A
SECULAR
SOCIETY.1966.**

Wilson argued that the greater emphasis on rational thought in modern society has caused secularization.

KEY CONCEPTS: rationalization.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

* "Religious thinking is perhaps the area which evidence most conspicuous (obvious) change. Men act less and less in response to religious motivation: they assess the world in empirical and rational terms." He identified four main factors which encouraged the development of rational (not emotional) thinking:

- 1) Ascetic Protestantism which 'created an ethic which was pragmatic, rational, controlled and anti-emotional.'
- 2) The rational organization of society in organizations which impose rational behaviour on people.
- 3) Greater knowledge of the social & physical world through science.
- 4) Development of rational ideologies & organizations to solve social problems - we no longer rely on religious bodies to sort us out.

* He basically argued that the rational worldview (way of looking at things) was the enemy of religion, which is based on faith and is therefore not rational and doesn't make sense to us any more.

RESEARCH METHOD: theoretical, based on review of other sociological studies.

WEAKNESSES: takes a macro view, may achieve greater understanding (verstehen) by taking a micro view also, to find out the impact of rationalization on people's relationship with religion. This study is out-dated and cannot take account of changes in post-modern society as outlined by Bauman, Giddens and Heelas.



Martin

He wrote
1978.

Martin argues the term 'secularization' should be removed from the dictionary. He thinks we should carefully study the ways in which religion has changed in different times and places.

KEY CONCEPTS: disengagement, religious pluralism, .

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

- * Martin argues that by focusing on the UK and the US, sociologists have taken a narrow view of social change and religion & found different patterns of belief & participation in different societies.
- * In the UK, he argues there has been a **disengagement** or withdrawing of the church from the wider society along with a decline in the power, wealth, influence and prestige of the church.
- * Martin argues that the role & strength of religion in modern societies are determined by the following factors: 1) the degree of **religious pluralism** in a society; 2) the political system & the relationship between the church & the state; 3) the extent to which religion helps to provide a sense of national, regional or ethnic identity.
- * Martin argues religion is likely to increase in importance because:
 - i) religion is no longer closely associated with rich & powerful elites, so religion has become more acceptable to those from lower classes.
 - ii) rationalism has lost its appeal & there is growing interest in the supernatural and the religious to give hope to people.

RESEARCH METHOD: some analysis of the role of religion in other countries.

WEAKNESSES: This is rather out-dated and won't be able to take account of recent events such as growing Christian and Islamic fundamentalism in response to the reactions of 9/11.

Global perspectives of religion and fundamentalism – summary.

1. While secularisation might be occurring in Europe, a religious resurgence appears to be occurring in the rest of the world.
2. Islam is growing rapidly. If present trends continue, it will be the world's largest religion by the mid-21st century.
3. Pentecostalism is the fastest growing Christian religion. It has grown dramatically in many developing countries.
4. The main growth has been in the more conservative branches of religions – particularly in America.
5. Religious resurgence has been seen as a response to the rapid social change and disruption resulting from modernisation and globalisation.
6. There are two main theories of religious resurgence: a) as a defensive reaction (to invasion, immigration etc) and b) as a proactive response (to solve problems).
7. As a defensive reaction, religious resurgence may provide:
 - A retreat into a religious haven;
 - Certainty based on essential 'truths' about life;
 - Resistance identities (*veiling's a great example*);
 - Cultural defence (*seeking solace in religion in the face of hostility from others in society*).
8. As a proactive response, religion may provide:
 - A strict morality;
 - A guide to self-empowerment;
 - A recipe for upward mobility;
 - Support for the family;
 - A positive, non-western identity.

Global perspectives and fundamentalism

Concept	Definition
Fundamentalism	
Ideological cohesion	
Orthodoxy	
Ortho-praxis	
Structural conditions	
Contingency and chance	
Human choice and leadership	



Bruce

He wrote
2000.



Examines the sociological causes of fundamentalism & sees it as a 'rational response ... to social, political & economic' constraints.

KEY CONCEPTS: fundamentalism, ideological cohesion, orthodoxy, ortho-praxis.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

* Argues the main cause of fundamentalism is 'the belief of religious traditionalists that the world around them has changed so as to threaten their ability to reproduce themselves & their tradition.' But what else..?
i) some religions have more potential for radicalism, particularly those with a single sacred text (the Qur'an or the Bible), this **ideological cohesion** makes it much easier to mobilise people; ii) fundamentalist beliefs are stronger in groups who feel they have a common external enemy - such as Islamic fundamentalist groups united in hostility to the US & allies; iii) the way in which belief systems are controlled within a religion. Catholicism is centralized in Rome, but Islam and Protestantism isn't; this permits radical clerics to influence believers; iv) it needs a supply of potential recruits, particularly those who are young, unemployed or poor; v) the path fundamentalism takes is affected by its relation to politics. In the US, New Right Christian fundamentalists have had ample opportunities to promote their cause through politics, where this opportunity is not present, fundamentalism is more likely to take a violent turn.
* Christianity emphasizes being religious through holding the correct beliefs (**orthodoxy**), whereas Islam places more emphasis on being religious through one's actions (**ortho-praxis**). So the emphasis on action & power along with the lack of democratic involvement, makes it more likely that Islamic fundamentalists will turn to violence.

RESEARCH METHOD: theoretical review of fundamentalist religions.

WEAKNESSES: His views are strongly influenced by his support for secularization & his view that Islamic fundamentalism is more likely to be violent is very controversial.



Almond et al

They wrote
**STRONG
RELIGION.
2003.**

They agree with Bruce that secularization & modernization cause fundamentalism but offer broader factors to explain this.

KEY CONCEPTS: structural conditions, contingency & chance, human choice & leadership.

SUMMARY OF THEORY:

* They argue that fundamentalism can be understood on three levels:
i) the **structural** level is concerned with long-term contextual conditions like unemployment, war, persecuted ethnic groups (Palestine / Israel) or dislocated people & social changes. This misery can cause religious groups to mobilise.

ii) **Contingency & chance**, where although structural events as described above do have an impact, fundamentalist activity also depends on which specific historical events have occurred (such as invasions etc).

iii) **Human choice & leadership** mean that fundamentalism will not develop without religious leaders who can mobilise large numbers of people in support of their religious beliefs.

* They think the nature of religious organisations is also important, ones where individual congregations have some independence are more likely to develop break-away groups, including fundamentalist ones.

RESEARCH METHOD: a review of a major comparative study of fundamentalist religious throughout the world, 75 case studies carried out over 20 year period, interviews in Middle East, North Africa and the US.

STRENGTHS: A thorough research method which has more validity than purely theoretical studies. It is also dynamic in that it allows us to apply wider social factors to the spread of fundamentalism.

Item A

Traditional religious organisations have faced many challenges over the past thirty years. In the past, their influence in society was considerable and they were seen as the mainstream spiritual movements. Some sociologists argue that most people participated in such organisations, even if only to reinforce their social status. These organisations also had substantial political power and influence.

However, changes in society over the past few decades have presented considerable challenges to the traditional roles and status of these organisations. Similarly, some sociologists argue that many people have reassessed their personal commitment to traditional religious organisations. As a result, such organisations have lost both support and membership.

1. (a) Identify and briefly explain **three** reasons why traditional religious organisations may have lost support and/or membership over the past thirty years, **apart from** that referred to in **Item A**. *(9 marks)*

(b) Using material from **Item A** and elsewhere, assess the view that most people today see spirituality and religious belief as purely private and personal matters. *(18 marks)*

2. ‘The growth and influence of religious fundamentalism across the world challenges the claim that contemporary society has become more secular.’

To what extent do sociological arguments and evidence support this view of contemporary religious belief and practice? *(33 marks)*

3. Assess the view that secularisation has been a feature only of modern European societies. *(33 marks)*