

The contribution of religion to societies and cultures in the 20th century.



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“ Religion which does not have an impact on culture is a toothless tiger. ”

This quote exemplifies the idea that if religion did not impact an individual, it would have the same effect of a ferocious tiger not being able to exert its force. From the Latin religio (the respect for what is sacred) and religare (to bind, in the sense of an obligation), the word religion is an organised collection of belief and practice systems, focusing on what people determine to be sacred or spiritual.

Throughout history and societies across the world, religious leaders have used sacred narratives, symbols and traditions in an attempt to give more meaning to life and to gain wisdom through the understanding of the universe. In every known culture throughout centuries, a form of religion is found, practiced either within a public manner within a group, or in a private sanction. The practice of religion can be found through different practices such as feasts and festivals, God or gods, music and art, meditation or initiation, sacrifice or service, and other aspects of culture.

In order to gain insight of its contributions within cultures and society, it is important to look at this question with a sociological perspective. While a majority of people believe religion to be an individual process, as peoples beliefs are highly personal, religion is also considered to be a social institution. Social scientists recognise that religion exists as an organised and integrated set of beliefs and behaviours centred on basic social needs and values. Thus, religion is a cultural universal found in all social groups.

The definition of a society is a community of people living in a particular region and having shared customs, laws, and organizations. Living within a societal range, we are accustomed to accept or reject the ideas of religion in <https://assignbuster.com/the-contribution-of-religion-to-societies-and-cultures-in-the-20th-century/>

which society develops and displays. When considering the impact of religion on a society this can have both a positive or negative impact. " Religious communities live by analogy: they see connections between God and humanity, between the spiritual and the material, and between the human persons who form the wider community.

They value relationships and context and harmonious order. " Archbishop Thomas Collins. Religion discusses the extremely debatable questions such as ' the meaning of life'. This leads into deeper questions such as " Who am I? Is there life after death? Is there a God? " Although these questions may seem impossible to answer, for individuals it brings a sense of comfort and belonging in search for those answers. It brings an individual self-worth and happiness, and the feeling of something to live for.

This is one of the main reasons people decide to follow a certain religion - to bring them self-pleasure and to do right by their religion, therefore contributing positively to society. The overall contribution of religion is about beauty. In literature, architecture, painting, sculpture and even film we discover the exhilarating and inexhaustible depth of beauty in life. Under the topic of beauty, religion enters subtopics that emphasizes the giftedness of beauty, promotes beauty to enhance human flourishing, and encourages the response of awe and gratitude.

The Bible is still considered one of the greatest works of literature of all time. This sacred text is universal, having the ability to reach out to an international audience. The Bible has the ability to build a community as cultures find these stories relatable. Also, the beauty in architecture found in places of worship is outstanding. This shows that the religious imagination  
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recognises the ferment in the community before the beauty of such structures, such as the Sistine Chapel, attracting thousands of tourists daily to admire the beauty.

Another major contribution of religion to society is the promotion of justice through the pursuit of common good. International figures such as Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, and Nelson Mandela are stellar representatives of religion who helped change oppressive social, economic and political systems - benefiting not only there society, but cultures around the world. Although religion can impact society in an extremely positive aspect, it can also be used as a manipulative tool for its promotion.

It can encourage violence when religious believers are convinced that their views are being challenged, leading to an outbreak in wars. A recent example was associated with Islamic Terrorists being linked to sporadic violence in Uzbekistan. A man of god, Ulugbek Kodirov, entered the USA with the plan of assassinating Obama as he ' knew this was what he was supposed to do for Islam'. He stated he was acting at the direction of an Islamic terror group in his home country. When analysing this situation, the manipulative ability that eligion can empower over an individual is drastic. If it has the power to impact the individual, obviously the society will become involved. Geographically small cultures within Iran/Iraq can be hugely influenced by religion, as their cultures would focus on the main foundations that it provides. Another example of this is the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a militant movement which was operating in northern Uganda, South Sudan and entered the Central African Republic.

The group's main source of ideology is Christian fundamentalism; however, these followers under the group leader Joseph Kony (who proclaims himself as the spokesman for God) have been accused of widespread human rights violations, including murder, mutilation, child-sex slavery and abductions. This is a clear example of where the contribution of religion negatively impacts a culture - as a small society is more susceptible in acting for these violent crimes, as their knowledge of the outside world is censored. The fact that religion in these types of societies is monitored, doesn't allow the individual to practice by oneself.

Sacred texts are edited to suit the religious dictators views, punishments are ensured when one does worship correctly, and it is very rare for the ability of individuals to privately worship their personal beliefs. " There are those that advocate that the voice of religion be silenced, or at least relegated to the purely private sphere. There are those who argue that the public celebration of festivals such as Christmas should be discouraged. These are worrying signs of a failure to appreciate not only the rights of believers to freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, but also the legitimate role of religion in the public square. Pope Benedict XVI In conclusion, religion is the backbone to our society. Although it has the capacity to negatively impact cultures, it also has the ability to share insight into the future generation religious leaders. Many religions send across the same message, having the same values and methods of worshipping. When these values are taken on board, it can provide positivity in different cultures, giving individuals renewed hope and a positive outlook on life.