

# Example of religion in modern society research paper

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



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## **Sociologists of Religion and their Thoughts**

Sociology of religion is considered as the study of values, practices, beliefs, religion's organizational forms utilizing the methods and tools of the disciplines and principles of sociology (Dillon, 2003).. The major investigation however may include exploitation of both the quantitative methods such as polls, surveys, census and demographic analysis as well as qualitative techniques such as observation, archival analysis, participation, documentary and historical material (Berzano & Riis, 2012). Sociologists associated with religious studied however study each aspect of the religion such as how a person is supposed and believed to act in the worship and his actions when he/she is our of his/her declared convictions.

However, the sociologists of religion study the varying role of the religion in close personal relationships and in public i. e., in economic, media and political scenarios (Schaefer, 2006). Conflict and pluralism in the global religions, nature of sects in the religion, religion's influence on gender, sex relating issues, race, the media's effect and the effect of contemporary culture on religion are the topics of attention and interest for the sociologists of religion. Traditionally, religious study was the main focus of the sociology discipline with the influential figures that include Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, who have written extensively on function and role of the religion in society of humans.

Now the sociologists researching on religion play a leading role in helping the journalists as well as general public in publicizing the cultic misfortunes and tragedies in order to make people aware of the theme of religion. This sociology of religion teaches and explicitly explains about the functions of

religion at individual and societal level. But, religion is the most difficult field of study because sociologists have to make the sense of rituals and beliefs and the other remaining areas are sensitive as they are on the ideals that are source of inspiration for the believers.

## **Religion and Functionalism**

Functionalists consider society as an amalgamation of the social institutions, which include the family, religion and economy. According to them, society is just like an organism that requires basic needs and necessities for his survival (Arnadottir, 2010). These requirements are however met by various institutions that perform different functions. Functionalists are of the view that socially consensus shared values and norms that one follows help to make the order achievable and possible (Burhenn, 1980). Religious institutions help in creating consensus of values and social solidarity. Among functionalists, the names of Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Max are noteworthy.

Emile Durkheim's perspective about religion is that it is a combined system of the practices and beliefs relating to the sacred things. Further, he is of the view that the religion is an expression of the cohesion in the society (Chiluwa, 2013). According to him religion is the society's cement that led men to turn from the daily activities of life in which he has been trapped to a universal devotion to the sacred objects. He explicitly explained that religion is a source of solidarity, trust, sociability and a way of becoming identifiable at individual level in the established community and society. Durkheim has identified the religion's social origin and links between different religions in

diverse cultures in order to find a collective denominator. He has however concluded that there are four main functions of religion in the society which are discipline imposed by the disciplinary actions, a strong link between the people i. e., cohesion, vitalization for boosting the spirit and excited well being (Pickering, 1984).

Max Weber has however addressed questions of contribution of religion for maintaining social order, and the relationship between capitalist society and religion. In his famous work i. e., *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, he has stressed that certain specific characteristics of abstinent Protestantism has influenced the capitalism development, rational and balanced legal state and bureaucracy in the west (Smelser & Haferkamp, 1992). He has also explained the effects of Protestantism in the beginning of capitalism and explained that is not totally materialistic but in fact originated from the religious ideas and ideals. He has also found that the ideals of religion have a strong impact on the social development and innovation of the economic system of USA and Europe. He also noted that they are the sole factors that lead to their growth and development.

Karl Marx has not done detailed study on religion but he has done other studies of society. He considers that religion is the representation of addiction of human beings. In his opinion, religion should and will disappear and it is people's opium. He believes that religion has diverted the attention far away from the injustices and equalities in the present life and it is done with the promise of reward and happiness in the life hereafter.

## **The World Religions and Social Change**

The social and the classical thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth century thought in different ways that the religions of the world would disappear or become increasingly attenuated due to the expansion of the modern organizations and institutions resulting in the secularization (Brown, 2009). But, the fact is that religion remains astonishingly salient and vibrant socially and is bringing social change. Religion is the most powerful factor in the rising and emerging order of the world and is solving several conflicts occurring in the world. Religions of the world are not in the state of civic evisceration and decline, instead those structures and forms that are specifically identifiable with the initial modernity are being challenged, threatened to some extent and shaped by the processes of rising late modernity (Debreceen, 2008). Generally, these comprise of bureaucracies and particularly contain confessional and denominational religion, states of nation, national cities and corporations and scholarly subjects and disciplines in districts.

The geo-political system of the world however displays the movement in the direction of amalgamation and unification across the boundaries of nation but re-building of tribes and splintering occurs within the boundaries.

Considering that in the traditional conflict of Palestinians and Jews, Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat has bridged and enormous gulf in order to start the process of peace (Brundtland, 2013). Moreover, the earlier soviet republics are in quest of union with the west that is bringing change in culture, traditions, thinking and ways of living of people. Religion is regarded as the vital component of social actors and the beliefs and viewpoints of religion

can direct the social action that leads to the social change in the society. The relationship between the religion and social change is however not fixed; it varies according the nature of specific religion, type of the social structures, the culture where they are located at any particular time and place. The world religions can be and their percentage of prevalence in the world can be seen from the figure 1.

Figure 1: World Religions and their Share (Source: able2know. org)

## **Religious Movement**

The religious movements indicate categorizations in cults and sects that is regarded as unenthusiastic connotation. The religious movements are started for introducing new religion that id different from the older religion. The variations however differ according to the user. According to some academics religious movements are terms associated with unique and distinctive religion while others considers that such movements are unconventional denominations such as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Latter Day Saints are considered as denominations in Christianity religion (Driggs, 2001).

Whenever a novel religious movement starts to gain popularity, there is a repercussion from the major and dominating religions. It however pave the way to negative affiliations of the new religion and these associations are based on segmentation that include cult and sect that come up with devastating and destructive results. Examples of these types of religious movements include the people's temple and Jim Jones and suicide of vast variety of people in their group in Guyana and Heaven's gate, which is a

religious group of UFO where approximately 38 people associated with them committed suicide in order to be sent to spaceship putting out of sight behind the Comet Hale Bopp. Also there are religions movements that do not have any kind of unhelpful associations. Examples of such religions are Islamic Nation, Realism, and Jehovah's Witnesses etc.

Considering the sociologist's perspective Max Weber has described that cults are based on the charismatic style of leadership. Weber however explained that for expanding and maintaining cult, the element of charisma should be considered as necessary. According to sociologists Roy Wallis, cult is the explained by epistemic and validated individuality that forms a group having no main focus as the individual participant has the final choice of contribution.

## **Religious Organization**

Religious organizations are present in almost all societies and they play different roles in maintaining and setting behavioral and moral standards. Religion keep on attempting in order to trace the meaning and importance of life and it seems to contain those things that we have done or completed (Armstrong, 1993). Churches, mosques, synagogue, and faith based organizations, which are tied to the religious organizations, are all included in the religious organizations. The religious organizations of three major religions of the world are worth mentioning. These three religions are:

- Islam
- Christianity
- Hinduism

In Islam the major religious institution or organization is mosque or masjid. Azan is given in mosques in order to awaken the Muslims to come for worship of Allah and Namaz is offered there in the form of gathering without any distinction between human beings and the Muslims, which are followers of Islam are taught about their religion there. Juma khutaba hold great importance in preaching Muslims about their religion and saying of God and His prophet (Nielsen, Akgonul, Alibasic, & Racijs, 2013). Further, the Holy Qa'aba is a sacred religious place for Muslim, where all the Muslims unite in order to perform Hajj or Umara.

For the followers of Christianity Churches are the religious organizations. Christian community worship in the churches on Sunday, which is Sabbath and also they offer there prayer in churches on special celebrations and festivals. Nuns and monks however attend the church on daily basis (Wright & Zozula, 2012). Additionally, most of the Christians worship or pray at homes also through family or individual devotions. The services in church are usually led by the ordained minister or priest. The services in the churches include hymns, a sermon, readings and prayers.

Weber has considered Christianity as a religion of salvation that demands non-stop struggles against the negativity and sins in the society. To Weber, Christianity was a salvation religion that claims people can be " saved" when they convert to certain beliefs and moral codes. (Honigsheim, 1950). In Christianity, the idea of " sin" and its atonement by God's grace plays a fundamental role. Unlike the Eastern religions' passive approach, salvation religions like Christianity are active, demanding continuous struggles against sin and the negative aspects of society.



In Hinduism, Mandir is considered as the religious organization and place of worship. Murtis or idols are present in the Hindu's temples whom they worship (Fowler, 1997). In homes of Hindus there are decorated and adorned shrines that are worship alters. There are framed deities image and marble or copper statutes around the whole room. The form of the worship at home is known as puja and this is similar to thanksgiving, where the devotees put all offerings i. e., butter, milk, water, fruits, flowers, and lamp on the tray near to shrine and offer them to deities at particular point I worship. The waving of lamp known as arati, singing of hymns and praise verses and offering of food that is regarded as blessed are the necessary part of Hindu worship at home. All these organizations are playing significant role for preaching the people of their religion and to pull them towards worship of their God.

## **Religion in United States**

In the United States, religion is characterized by the diversity of the practices and beliefs related to religion. Various faiths have however thrived as well as putrefied in the country. Multicultural heritage of the immigrants and extended religions and those that are founded in the country have led it to become the most diverse and consistently growing country in the world. The largest and the major religion of the United States is Christianity.

In 2011, it is found that about 78 percent of the adult population in America has disclosed their association with Christianity, below 2 percent people are Jews, below 1 percent are Muslims and 15 percent do not consider themselves linked to any particular religion. So, it means that approximately

95 percent of all the Americans that have religious identity are Christians (Newport, 2012). In the United States, the percentage of religious preference of Protestants is 52. 5%, Catholic 23. 6%, Mormon 1. 9%, Jewish 1. 6%, and Muslim 0. 5% (Newport, 2012). It can also be seen clearly from the following figure 2.

Figure 2: Religious Preference in United States (Source: Data from Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2011).

Christianity was introduced during European colonization era. According to the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches 2011 that has make combination of American people with Canadian people possible, and according to the National Council of Churches, the major denominations of Christianity in the United States include the Catholic Church with 68, 503456 members. The South Baptist Convention with 16, 160, 088 members, the United Methodist Church with 7, 774, 931 affiliated members, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints with 6, 058, 907 associated members, and the Church of God in Christ with 5, 499, 875 affiliates (NCC, 2010). In the United States, because of the larger population, the Protestants and Christians are more as compared to any other country in the world. Other countries have high percentage of Protestants and Christians within the total population.

## **Religion Affiliation and Socioeconomic Status**

Sociologists have been trying to find the effect of the religious affiliation on the socioeconomic status. Social class is measured by the socioeconomic status and is associated with the religious practices and affiliations of the

individuals. This affiliation is however concerned much about how the religion is being practices rather the religiosity degree. The lower class members are likely to be affiliated with the sect conscious and religion of fundamentalists. Weber has determined that socioeconomic inequalities and differences are prevailing among the religious group in the societies.

Latest research by advance sociologists also confirms this fact that some groups are considered as superior while other are regarded as inferior, and this is mostly evident in the structure of U. S. religion (Gorski, 2003).

Episcopalians and American Presbyterians, which represent high denominations of Protestants in America, have average socioeconomic status. Baptists have below average socio-economic status. There are also income inequalities in different countries of the world. For example Jews are earning much more than any other religious group in America.

But, religious affiliation helps in reduction of the social inequality in the society and help to maintain socioeconomic status in the society. Religion affiliation however shapes several processes that help in the determination of the family wealth as positive influence of religious affiliation is observed on the factors such as stability of the marital status, participation of females in the labor force, fertility, network and social contacts formation, education, inter-generational human capital transmission behavior of investment and saving and others (Keister, 2003).

## **The Spread of Islam Revivalism**

The revival of Islam and its spread is due to the modern global response and changes associated with it. the modernization of the society include

formation of the states at national level, organization of the capitalist economies, scientific and technical development and social and cultural changes that escort such phenomenon has paved the way to the generation of religious movements among Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Jews and other nativists, and populists etc. However Islamic revivalism is not a novel phenomenon. The previous history of the Islamic societies suggests that there are several examples of the revival movements and reforms that have been developed as a result of the changing economic and political conditions.

The contemporary Islamic revival wave movement has its origin in 1920s-1930s when foundation of the Society of Muslim Brothers was laid in Egypt by Jama'at I Islami and Hassan Al-Banna and in India by Mawlana Abu 'Ala Mawdudi. In 1950, these movements were disappeared due to suppression of Muslim Brothers and also due to World War II (Lapidus, 1997). But, in 1970, the new generation makes advancement and makes revivalism of Islam possible. The basic purpose of this revivalism was the attainment of education and overthrowing corrupt and dominating government officials. But, after the revival of Islam religious values are regarded, considered as important, values, identification and beliefs of people strengthened.

The emphasis on the value of Islam however is not intended to return to the past period/era but it represents an effort in order to cope with the latest and contemporary problems by transforming commitments to the major principles and not including the Islamic historical explanations. This revivalism has however brought many positive changes in the societies of the world. For example this phenomenon has changed the fabric of whole

society by narrowing the status gap that was prevailing in the society (Lapidus, 1997).

## **Religious Nationalism and Violence**

Religious nationalism is considered as the relationship of the nationalism to particular belief, religion, affiliation or dogma. It is often claimed that religious nationalism in the society paves the way to creation of violence in the society. This is true due to that fact that religious nationalism pave the way to creating race, caste, creed etc in the society and this disturbs balance of the society. Few people become dominating and they try to suppress others. They help to flourish religious communities that further play chaotic games in the society and leading to destruction of the culture. But, this is also a fact that such claims are the part of the ethnicity, which is politicized. They can however be understood clearly by encompassing the claims that are made on the basis of the ethno-national, ethno-religious, ethno-racial and ethno-cultural and ethno-regional identifications that have been proliferated in the developing as well as developed world during last century.

## **Conclusion**

In nut shell, the role of religion is very significant in modern era. Durkheim considers it as a reflection of the society. Max Weber considers that the religious values are strongly associated with the economic values. Karl Marx opinion is that religion is used just to exploit people. There are many religions in the world the major dominating religions are Islam, Christianity and Hinduism. In the United States majority population follows Christianity. Moreover, Islamic revivalism is an expression of and response to the

modernity of Muslims but this phenomenon also has deep root in the cultural and historical paradigm to support the Muslims for coping with the economic, cultural and political realities. Religious nationalism is considered as the creator of violence in the society but such allegations are the part of politicized civilizations.

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