

Religion in society critical thinking examples

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



Critical Review

I would like to begin by agreeing with Ronald for reporting that women have not been given an equal recognition in the church. Unlike their male counterparts, the womenfolk ' have had to struggle to liberate themselves from religious oppression' Reddie, 2001). Although they have now attained religious progress, they have been discriminated in these male-dominated Christian churches for a very long time. As the author acclaims, no woman could initially be given a leadership position especially in the mainline churches. However, I would like to point out that they are now liberated. Today, many of them have been ordained as church ministers to serve in different positions such as deaconess, pastors and bishops. Some of the major breakthroughs were realized in 1972 when Sally Priestand became the first woman rabbi in the conservative male dominated Judaism. Later, in 19989 and 2006, Barbara Haris and Catherine Jeffers became the pioneer women bishops in the Episcopal Church. Despite their low position in the society, women used religion as a platform to advocate for their liberation. Thus, they nowadays not only freely attend churches, but hold higher positions. In fact, many churches such as the Church of Christ Latter Day Saints, the largest global women organization, was founded by a woman, thanks to women theology.

In his analysis, the author discusses about stratification as a major threat to religious cohesion. In deed, the segregation of the society into racial, ethnic and gender hierarchies has thwarted religious progress in The United States of America (USA). As the author examines, religious stratification has destabilized the Christian community for a very long time. Surely, it began

during the colonial era when religious competition and ethnocentrism was the norm. Such a competition prompted the Anglicans, Congregationalists and the Presbyterians to fight for socio-political and economic dominations. This led to the placement of different religious groups into the lower, middle and higher strata. Later, people were discriminated based on their racial background. However, I would like to report that things have now changed. For instance, whereas the Presbyterians, Anglicans and the Congregationalists occupy the upper stratum, the Jews and the Baptists are in the middle and lower strata respectively. Although there still inter-religious struggles for power, membership size and resources, many churches have attained mobility. They have now come up with strategies such as sponsoring projects and electing Christian elites into political leaderships. This has helped to promote their mobility and dominance. The other important aspect of religion discussed by Ronald is civil religion. I would like to concur with him that Americans have had unique kind of religion with sacred symbols embedded in national unity. As the author argues, this is a very significant aspect of American religion which has been instrumental in promoting national socio-cultural integration. Besides, it has been instrumental in enhancing conformity to the national standards and determines the destiny of the Americans. This is a right proposition because it conforms to the stance of great sociologists such as Emile Durkheim and Jean Jacques Roseau who had 'linked religion to national unity and democracy' (Jones and Russell, 2005). Today, civil religion is deeply rooted in the original US religious organizations like the Adventist, Pentecostal and Mormon churches. As a national phenomenon, civil religion has played a

significant role during the election exercises. In deed, it is beliefs such as ' In God we trust,' ' Americanism,' ' Gob bless US,' ' US is a God's chosen nation' which instill the spirit of nationalism in the Americans.

Moreover, I would like to agree with Ronald's position on ecumenism. As he says, the Christian church has suffered a big blow as a result of the constant splitting of the mainline churches into numerous denominations, sects and cults. Truly, it is nonsensical for the church to be divided into Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Anglicanism, Protestantism, just to mention, but a few. This is necessary because it if only fueling hatred and religious reductionism which are very unhealthy for the success of any religion. In this regard, I would like to support him for saying that the Christian community should come together and form ecumenical organizations to advocate for their unity. It is very unfortunate for the Christians to engage in constant wrangles merely because of their historical and doctrinal beliefs. As Kasper, Walter states, they should ' form groups such as the World Council of Churches to deliberate over contentious issues including gay marriage, abortion and family planning' (p 114). Of course, it is only through the interdenominational dialogue that US can attain religious unity and tolerance. Hence, the ongoing negotiations between the Roman Catholicism and the Orthodox; Anglicanism and the Old Catholic Churches of Europe and Protestantism and the Eastern Orthodox and Presbyterian churches should be encouraged. This is the only way through which the ' Christian community can tackle the controversies surrounding the fundamentalist ideologies which have torn a part Christians' (Marsden, 2007). Hence, it is evidenced that ecumenism can provide an ultimate answer to any type of contentious

issue threatening the unity of the church.

Finally, I would like to point out that Ronald gives a comprehensive coverage of position of black Americans in the church. Obviously, the blacks have been victims of racism. However, as he states, this was not only limited to socio-political arena, but also extended to the religion. Thus, initially, they were not given a total religious freedom. Meaning, they could not freely mingle with the whites in certain churches. Besides, they could not be allowed to ascend to the leadership positions such as bishop because they were reserved for their white counterparts. I think this explains why great African-Americans such as James Cone, Cornel West and Hopkins Dwight introduced black theology to advocate for their own liberation. As an oppressed lot, the blacks felt the necessity of formulating their own theology which focused on salvation. To them, religion would be a platform through which they would advocate for their freedom. Therefore, they decided to tailor the teachings to be more pragmatic. Just the same way God had used Moses and Jesus to liberate the Israelites, the African-Americans opted to use the church for the same.

In conclusion, I would like to say that Ronald wrote a good book. He was accurate in his analysis of the religion of America. His positions on civil religion, religion and women, ecumenism, fundamentalism and the position of Black-Americans in the religious sphere hold water. It makes the book appropriate for a proper understanding of the sociology of religion. However, he should have broadened his scope to look at the religious developments in other parts of the world.

Works Cited

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