

## Chapter 1 : Sociology of religion - Wikipedia

*Despite the higher purpose of religion being a tool for spiritual progression, religion has always been and continues to be largely a social activity. For example religious people, will typically be more inclined to visit regular religious programmes which are a group activity.*

Religio Religion from O. One possible interpretation traced to Cicero , connects lego read, i. The definition of religio by Cicero is cultum deorum, "the proper performance of rites in veneration of the gods. Augustine , following the interpretation given by Lactantius in Divinae institutiones, IV, The term was sparsely used in classical Greece but became more frequently used in the writings of Josephus in the first century AD. It was used in mundane contexts and could mean multiple things from respectful fear to excessive or harmfully distracting practices of others; to cultic practices. It was often contrasted with the Greek word deisidaimonia which meant too much fear. Throughout classical South Asia , the study of law consisted of concepts such as penance through piety and ceremonial as well as practical traditions. Medieval Japan at first had a similar union between imperial law and universal or Buddha law, but these later became independent sources of power. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the terms Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, and world religions first entered the English language. What is called ancient religion today, they would have only called law. There are however two general definition systems: The very attempt to define religion, to find some distinctive or possibly unique essence or set of qualities that distinguish the religious from the remainder of human life, is primarily a Western concern. The attempt is a natural consequence of the Western speculative, intellectualistic, and scientific disposition. It is also the product of the dominant Western religious mode, what is called the Judeo-Christian climate or, more accurately, the theistic inheritance from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The theistic form of belief in this tradition, even when downgraded culturally, is formative of the dichotomous Western view of religion. That is, the basic structure of theism is essentially a distinction between a transcendent deity and all else, between the creator and his creation, between God and man. We just know that it is done, annually, weekly, daily, for some people almost hourly; and we have an enormous ethnographic literature to demonstrate it. He also emphasized the cultural reality of religion, which he defined as [â€] the entirety of the linguistic expressions, emotions and, actions and signs that refer to a supernatural being or supernatural beings. When more or less distinct patterns of behavior are built around this depth dimension in a culture, this structure constitutes religion in its historically recognizable form. Religion is the organization of life around the depth dimensions of experienceâ€”varied in form, completeness, and clarity in accordance with the environing culture. He also argued that the belief in spiritual beings exists in all known societies. In his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience* , the psychologist William James defined religion as "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine". Sacred things are not, however, limited to gods or spirits. Religious beliefs Traditionally, faith , in addition to reason, has been considered a source of religious beliefs. The interplay between faith and reason, and their use as perceived support for religious beliefs, have been a subject of interest to philosophers and theologians. Mythology The word myth has several meanings. A traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon; A person or thing having only an imaginary or unverifiable existence; or A metaphor for the spiritual potentiality in the human being. Religions of pre-industrial peoples, or cultures in development, are similarly called myths in the anthropology of religion. The term myth can be used pejoratively by both religious and non-religious people. There, myth is defined as a story that is important for the group whether or not it is objectively or provably true. But from a mythological outlook, whether or not the event actually occurred is unimportant. Instead, the symbolism of the death of an old life and the start of a new life is what is most significant. Religious believers may or may not accept such symbolic interpretations. Worldview Religions have sacred histories , narratives , and mythologies which may be preserved in sacred scriptures , and symbols and holy places , that aim to explain the meaning of life , the origin of life , or the Universe.

## Chapter 2 : Religion - Wikipedia

*Religion can provide a sense of increased purpose, but it's not an entirely adequate substitute for social interaction. "Although our current research suggests that religion and God may compensate for some of the purpose that social relationships would otherwise provide, it did not restore purpose to a level comparable to that of people who.*

Theoretical perspectives[ edit ] Symbolic anthropology and phenomenology[ edit ] Symbolic anthropology and some versions of phenomenology argue that all humans require reassurance that the world is safe and ordered place – that is, they have a need for ontological security. The inability of science to offer psychological and emotional comfort explains the presence and influence of non-scientific knowledge in human lives, even in rational world. Functionalism[ edit ] Unlike symbolic anthropology and phenomenology , functionalism points to the benefits for social organization which non-scientific belief systems provide and which scientific knowledge fails to deliver. Belief systems are seen as encouraging social order and social stability in ways that rationally based knowledge cannot. From this perspective, the existence of non-rational accounts of reality can be explained by the benefits they offer to society. According to functionalists, "religion serves several purposes, like providing answers to spiritual mysteries, offering emotional comfort, and creating a place for social interaction and social control. It provides social support and social networking, offering a place to meet others who hold similar values and a place to seek help spiritual and material in times of need. We cannot explain forms of knowledge in terms of the beneficial psychological or societal effects that an outside observer may see them as producing. We have to look at the point of view of those who believe in them. People do not believe in God, practice magic, or think that witches cause misfortune because they think they are providing themselves with psychological reassurance, or to achieve greater cohesion for their social groups. They do so because they think their beliefs are correct – that they tell them the truth about the way the world is. Nineteenth-century rationalist writers, reflecting the evolutionist spirits of their times, tended to explain the lack of rationality and the dominance of false beliefs in pre-modern worlds in terms of the deficient mental equipment of their inhabitants. Such people were seen as possessing pre-logical, or non-rational, mentality. Rationalists see the history of modern societies as the rise of scientific knowledge and the subsequent decline of non-rational belief. Some of these beliefs, such as magic and witchcraft , had disappeared, while others, such as religion, had become marginalized. This rationalist perspective has led to secularization theories of various kinds. Sociological classifications of religious movements One common typology among sociologists, religious groups are classified as ecclesias , denominations , sects , or cults now more commonly referred to in scholarship as new religious movements. Note that sociologists give these words precise definitions which differ from how they are commonly used. For example, Charles Y. Glock is best known for his five-dimensional scheme of the nature of religious commitment. His list consist of the following variables: Secularization and Civil religion In relation to the processes of rationalization associated with the development of modernity , it was predicted in the works of many classical sociologists that religion would decline. In the United States, in particular, church attendance has remained relatively stable in the past 40 years. In Africa, the emergence of Christianity has occurred at a high rate. While Africa could claim roughly 10 million Christians in , recent estimates put that number closer to million. Furthermore, arguments may be presented regarding the concept of civil religion and new world belief systems. For instance, some sociologists have argued that steady church attendance and personal religious belief may coexist with a decline in the influence of religious authorities on social or political issues. Additionally, regular attendance or affiliation do not necessarily translate into a behaviour according to their doctrinal teachings. In other words, numbers of members might still be growing, but this does not mean that all members are faithfully following the rules of pious behaviours expected. In that sense, religion may be seen as declining because of its waning ability to influence behaviour. Religious economy[ edit ] According to Rodney Stark , David Martin was the first contemporary sociologist to reject the secularization theory outright. Martin even proposed that the concept of secularization be eliminated from social scientific discourse, on the grounds that it had only served ideological purposes and because there was no evidence of any general shift from a religious period in human

affairs to a secular period. Correspondingly, the more religions a society has, the more likely the population is to be religious. This points to the falsity of the secularization theory. On the other hand, Berger also notes that secularization may be indeed have taken hold in Europe, while the United States and other regions have continued to remain religious despite the increased modernity. Berger suggested that the reason for this may have to do with the education system; in Europe, teachers are sent by the educational authorities and European parents would have to put up with secular teaching, while in the United States, schools were for much of the time under local authorities, and American parents, however unenlightened, could fire their teachers. Berger also notes that unlike Europe, America has seen the rise of Evangelical Protestantism, or "born-again Christians".

Wilson is a writer on secularization who is interested in the nature of life in a society dominated by scientific knowledge. His work is in the tradition of Max Weber, who saw modern societies as places in which rationality dominates life and thought. Weber saw rationality as concerned with identifying causes and working out technical efficiency, with a focus on how things work and with calculating how they can be made to work more effectively, rather than why they are as they are. According to Weber, such rational worlds are disenchanted. Existential questions about the mysteries of human existence, about who we are and why we are here, have become less and less significant. Wilson [14] insists that non-scientific systems and religious ones in particular have experienced an irreversible decline in influence. He has engaged in a long debate with those who dispute the secularization thesis, some of which argue that the traditional religions, such as church-centered ones, have become displaced by an abundance of non-traditional ones, such as cults and sects of various kinds. Others argue that religion has become an individual, rather than a collective, organized affair. Still others suggest that functional alternatives to traditional religion, such as nationalism and patriotism, have emerged to promote social solidarity. Wilson does accept the presence of a large variety of non-scientific forms of meaning and knowledge, but he argues that this is actually evidence of the decline of religion. The increase in the number and diversity of such systems is proof of the removal of religion from the central structural location that it occupied in pre-modern times.

Ernest Gellner[ edit ] Unlike Wilson and Weber, Ernest Gellner [29] acknowledges that there are drawbacks to living in a world whose main form of knowledge is confined to facts we can do nothing about and that provide us with no guidelines on how to live and how to organize ourselves. In this regard, we are worse off than pre-modern people, whose knowledge, while incorrect, at least provided them with prescriptions for living. However, Gellner insists that these disadvantages are far outweighed by the huge technological advances modern societies have experienced as a result of the application of scientific knowledge. For example, he accepts that religions in various forms continue to attract adherents. He also acknowledges that other forms of belief and meaning, such as those provided by art, music, literature, popular culture a specifically modern phenomenon , drug taking, political protest, and so on are important for many people. Nevertheless, he rejects the relativist interpretation of this situation that in modernity, scientific knowledge is just one of many accounts of existence, all of which have equal validity. This is because, for Gellner, such alternatives to science are profoundly insignificant since they are technically impotent, as opposed to science. He sees that modern preoccupations with meaning and being as a self-indulgence that is only possible because scientific knowledge has enabled our world to advance so far. Unlike those in pre-modern times, whose overriding priority is to get hold of scientific knowledge in order to begin to develop, we can afford to sit back in the luxury of our well-appointed world and ponder upon such questions because we can take for granted the kind of world science has constructed for us.

Michel Foucault[ edit ] Michel Foucault was a post-structuralist who saw human existence as being dependent on forms of knowledge discourses that work like languages. In order to think at all, we are obliged to use these definitions. The knowledge we have about the world is provided for us by the languages and discourses we encounter in the times and places in which we live our lives. Thus, who we are, what we know to be true, and what we think are discursively constructed. Foucault defined history as the rise and fall of discourses. Social change is about changes in prevailing forms of knowledge. The job of the historian is to chart these changes and identify the reasons for them. Unlike rationalists, however, Foucault saw no element of progress in this process. To Foucault, what is distinctive about modernity is the emergence of discourses concerned with the control and regulation of the body. According to Foucault, the rise of body-centered discourses

necessarily involved a process of secularization. Pre-modern discourses were dominated by religion, where things were defined as good and evil, and social life was centered around these concepts. With the emergence of modern urban societies, scientific discourses took over, and medical science was a crucial element of this new knowledge. Modern life became increasingly subject to medical control – the medical gaze, as Foucault called it. The rise to power of science, and of medicine in particular, coincided with a progressive reduction of the power of religious forms of knowledge. For example, normality and deviance became more of a matter of health and illness than of good and evil, and the physician took over from the priest the role of defining, promoting, and healing deviance. The study suggests that religion is headed towards "extinction" in various nations where it has been on the decline: The model considers not only the changing number of people with certain beliefs, but also attempts to assign utility values of a belief in each nation. Luckmann points instead to the "religious problem" which is the "problem of individual existence. Two older approaches to globalization include modernization theory, a functionalist derivative, and world-systems theory, a Marxist approach. One of the differences between these theories is whether they view capitalism as positive or problematic. However, both assumed that modernization and capitalism would diminish the hold of religion. To the contrary, as globalization intensified many different cultures started to look into different religions and incorporate different beliefs into society. For example, according to Paul James and Peter Mandaville: Religion and globalization have been intertwined with each other since the early empires attempted to extend their reach across what they perceived to be world-space. Processes of globalization carried religious cosmologies – including traditional conceptions of universalism – to the corners of the world, while these cosmologies legitimated processes of globalization. This dynamic of inter-relation has continued to the present, but with changing and sometimes new and intensifying contradictions.

### Chapter 3 : Religion in Colonial America: Trends, Regulations, and Beliefs | Facing History and Ourselves

*The social dimension of religion is most important for the least social respondents, while the religiosity component of religion is most important for the happiest respondents, regardless of religious affiliation or service attendance. As such, it seems that the happiest are most likely to seek social purpose in religion, the poorest are most.*

The concept of religion is relatively recent considering that humanity has been on earth for at least , years and the oldest living religious traditions namely Hinduism date back to only BCE. What Constitutes a Religion? There can be no single definition of what constitutes religion because the word means many different things to different people. But certainly many people would agree that religion is a multifaceted entity consisting of but not limited to theology study of God , philosophy study of wisdom , anthropology study of human beings , mysticism awareness of an ultimate reality , morality rules of personal conduct , cosmology relationship between humans and the cosmos , social action, ethics, rituals etc. The Higher Purpose of Religion Religion has and continues to impact almost every aspect of human civilisation in both positive and negative ways. The great spiritual masters from all traditions, have taught that we need to adopt and develop higher qualities of love, mercy, generosity, kindness and so on. These higher qualities are a natural by product of developing a deeper connection with our spiritual nature and so in this respect religion can be thought of as a vehicle to support our spiritual development and our re-connection with divinity. In this way, human beings will be better at working together to create a better and more harmonious world. Unfortunately this higher truth does not necessarily correlate with the reality of what different religions have achieved throughout the last years. Nevertheless in the next section we will explore both the positive and negative roles that religion has historically played and continues to play in modern society. Positive Roles of Religion Source of hope and optimism Research in psychology indicates that positive attitudes are good for our health. For example, people who are optimistic about their chances of recovery from major diseases tend to better adhere to medical treatment plans, be less bothered by disease symptoms, and have better recovery rates. For many people, religion is a major source of hope and optimism. Promotes feelings of belongingness Humans are social animals and meeting belongingness needs is good for our psychological and physical health. Despite the higher purpose of religion being a tool for spiritual progression, religion has always been and continues to be largely a social activity. For example religious people, will typically be more inclined to visit regular religious programmes which are a group activity. Boosts self-esteem Like optimism, self-esteem has been shown to be a predictor of good physical health. We gain self-esteem from feeling as if we are people of value. In other words, many religious traditions assert that God, like a good parent, loves and values us no matter what we do. Many sources of self-esteem e. Provides protection from existential threats As intellectual animals, we humans are uniquely able to ask existential questions. Where did we come from? Why are we here? Is there any meaning to our existence? What happens to us when we die? Many scholars think that the capacity to ask such questions is why religion exists at all. For many, it is not satisfying to accept the possibility that human existence is by chance, and people are no more significant or enduring than any other organism. Religion offers feelings of existential meaning, purpose, and transcendence. Research supports this assertion as increased religiosity is associated with increased feelings of meaning and decreased existential anxieties. Promotes healing of mind and body Psychoneuroimmunology PNI , is a relatively recent branch of science that enforces beliefs that physicians have held for many centuries, perhaps well before the times of the ancient Greeks. Specifically, PNI studies the connection between the brain and the immune system. Religious people will most likely possess a strong belief in the idea of being healed successfully through God or other divine beings and so as a result, religious and spiritual people have been shown to have a higher ability to experience healing of their own mind and body. Improved mental and physical health A review of more than 40 scientific studies has found that religion appears to soothe the body as well as the soul, and as a consequence people who are highly religious tend to live longer than others. Several reasons have been given as to why this is the case, and they include a healthier lifestyle, a positive mental attitude and the social support provided by religious communities. Encourages charity and altruism Many religious teachings have taught about the

importance of giving up ones time and money to those who are less fortunate than ourselves. Certainly over the last few thousand years the majority of charity work was co-ordinated and performed almost exclusively through religious institutions whereas large secular charitable bodies are a phenomenon of more recent times. Food for the soul Religious traditions provide many teachings to help heal the individual. When individuals are healed, families are healed, and when families are healed, society is healed. So religion feeds the hunger of the soul and your soul has more needs than your physical body does. The Negative Roles of Religion Anxiety created through scientific and religious views Everyone knows that stress and anxiety can compromise health and well-being. Perhaps ironically, religion, which can help reduce anxiety, can also cause it. The reason is that some religious beliefs are at odds with scientific knowledge and research in cognitive dissonance theory indicates that people are distressed by these types of situations and go to great lengths to resolve them in some way. For example, if a person strongly desires to believe that God created humans in their present form but is confronted with an increasing amount of evidence that another perspective evolution is more accurate, the individual may be distressed. Bad religious programming There are many examples of religious ideas which are bad for mother earth, bad for creating human unity and bad for the advancement of society. Examples of such beliefs include viewing people of other religions as unbelievers and preventing scientific research because it may conflict with our own religious ideas. Injustice and wars Humanity has gone to war and fought with itself over many different non-religious things including minerals, resources and land. Much of the conflict and war in the 20th century was also as a result of non-religious atheist ideologues with Hitler leaning on the work of atheist philosopher Frederick Nietzsche and Stalin leaning on Karl Marx for support. Nevertheless it is unfortunate that people have used religion since its creation as an excuse to go to war with one another and use religion as a tool to justify their oppressive actions. Rationalisation for hatred and prejudice Many religious institutions have been responsible for contributing towards social injustice and hatred towards members of their own communities who may for example support different interpretations of holy texts or may hold different views around morality such as supporting homosexual marriages. Power hungry religious leaders Religion is usually started by pure, enlightened beings like Jesus, Nanak, Buddha whose aims are to help humanity understand higher spiritual truths and make the world a better place. Then much later the followers of those spiritual masters will formalise the teachings into a set of religious doctrine and build institutions with seats of power usually aimed at controlling people. As with any other secular or political institution those centres of religion because breeding grounds for power hungry, ego centric, self righteous personalities which do more harm to society than good. The harmony and cooperation that religion arguably facilitates within those boundaries is offset and some would say outweighed by the animosity that the religious rivalries created between e. Humanity appears to have the capability to finally transcend all tribal differences and merge into a single global community which would usher in an era of unprecedented harmony and cooperation, but religion appears to stand militantly in the way. In Summary The sikh scripture states that religion is very much a force with both positive and negative qualities. Those things done for the sake of children and spouse, with ego and attachment in the heart, are just more bonds. Wherever I look, there I see the noose of attachment to Maya. Leave a Reply You must be logged in to post a comment. Why not instead print to leaflets all available as A4 PDFs from the homepage by clicking the icon and distribute them in your local temple or multi-faith centre? Alternatively, why not write one of our upcoming leaflets and send it to us so we can publish it online?

## Chapter 4 : Religion can provide a sense of increased purpose in life for people who are socially disconnected

*Emile Durkheim argued that religion provides social cohesion and social control to maintain society in social solidarity. Collective consciousness, which is the fusion of all of our individual consciousnesses, creates a reality of its own.*

Sociologists study religion the same way they study other social institutions, like education or government. The aim is primarily to understand religions, but included in trying to understand religions is the aim of trying to predict what religions will eventually do or what will become of religions. To do this, sociologists employ demographic techniques, survey analysis, ethnography, and various other methodological approaches. It is important to note at the beginning of this chapter that sociologists study religion not to prove, disprove or normatively evaluate religion. This requires sociologists to assume a relativistic perspective that basically takes a neutral stance toward issues of right or wrong or true or false. That said, the social scientific study of religion can be challenging from a faith standpoint as it provides alternative, naturalistic explanations for many elements of religion.

**e. Definitions of Religion[ edit ]** The starting point for any study of religion should begin with a definition of the concept. This is particularly important in the study of religion because the definition determines which groups will be included in the analysis. Three general definitions have been proposed, each of which will be discussed briefly. Each definition has its merits and detriments, but what one often finds is that the definition of religion employed by a particular researcher or in the investigation of a particular topic depends on the question being asked.

**Profane[ edit ]** Perhaps the most well known definition of religion is that provided by Emile Durkheim. The sacred elements of social life are what make up religion. For example, the Torah in Judaism is sacred and treated with reverence and respect. The reverential treatment of the Torah would be contrasted with all sorts of more mundane things like cars or toys, which, for most people, are not considered sacred. Yet, the acute reader will be quick to point out that for some, cars and even toys are considered sacred and treated almost as reverentially as the Torah is treated in Judaism. This introduces one of the most significant criticisms of this definition - the typology can include things that are not traditionally understood to be religious like cars or toys. As a result, the definition is extremely broad and can encompass substantial elements of social life. Under this definition, nationalism would be considered religion.

**Religion as Existential Questioning[ edit ]** Another definition of religion among social scientists particularly social psychologists views religion as any attempt to answer existential questions **e.** This definition casts religion in a functional light as it is seen as serving a specific purpose in society. For instance, using this definition, someone who attends religious services weekly but makes no attempt to answer existential questions would not be considered religious. For a critique of this definition, see Dobbelaere [4].

**The Greek god Zeus. Religion as Supernature[ edit ]** The third social scientific definition views religion as the collective beliefs and rituals of a group relating to supernature. This definition is not without its problems as well, as some argue it can also include atheists who have a specific position against the existence of a god or gods. Yet because the beliefs and rituals are understood to be shared by a group, this definition could be argued to exclude atheists. Despite the problems with this last definition, it does most closely adhere to the traditional and popular view of what constitutes a religion. The basic idea is that there is a continuum along which religions fall, ranging from the protest-like orientation of sects to the equilibrium maintaining churches. Along this continuum are several additional types, each of which will be discussed in turn. The reader may notice that many of the labels for the types of religion are commonly employed by non-sociologists to refer to religions and tend to be used interchangeably. Sociologists, when speaking technically, will not use these labels interchangeably as they are designations for religions with very specific characteristics. Before describing these different religions, it is important for the reader to understand that these classifications are a good example of what sociologists refer to as ideal types. Ideal types are pure examples of the categories. Because there is significant variation in each religion, how closely an individual religion actually adheres to their ideal type classification will vary. Even so, the classification scheme is useful as it also outlines a sort of developmental process for religions.

**Church and Ecclesia[ edit ]** The first type of religion is the church. The church classification describes religions that are all-embracing of religious expression in a society. Religions

of this type are the guardians of religion for all members of the societies in which they are located and tolerate no religious competition. They also strive to provide an all-encompassing worldview for their adherents and are typically enmeshed with the political and economic structures of society. Johnstone [9] provides the following seven characteristics of churches: Today, the Roman Catholic Church has been forced into the denomination category because of religious pluralism or competition among religions. This is especially true of Catholicism in the United States. The change from a church to a denomination is still underway in many Latin American countries where the majority of citizens remain Catholics. A slight modification of the church type is that of ecclesia. The state churches of some European countries would fit this type. Denominations[ edit ] The denomination lies between the church and the sect on the continuum. Denominations come into existence when churches lose their religious monopoly in a society. A denomination is one religion among many. Johnstone provides the following eight characteristics of denominations: Sects[ edit ] Sects are newly formed religious groups that form to protest elements of their parent religion generally a denomination. Their motivation tends to be situated in accusations of apostasy or heresy in the parent denomination; they are often decrying liberal trends in denominational development and advocating a return to true religion. Interestingly, leaders of sectarian movements i. Most scholars believe that when sect formation does involve social class distinctions they involve an attempt to compensate for deficiencies in lower social status. An often seen result of such factors is the incorporation into the theology of the new sect a distaste for the adornments of the wealthy e. Another interesting fact about sects is that after their formation, they can take only three paths - dissolution, institutionalization, or eventual development into a denomination. If the sect withers in membership, it will dissolve. If the membership increases, the sect is forced to adopt the characteristics of denominations in order to maintain order e. And even if the membership does not grow or grows slowly, norms will develop to govern group activities and behavior. The development of norms results in a decrease in spontaneity, which is often one of the primary attractions of sects. The adoption of denomination-like characteristics can either turn the sect into a full-blown denomination or, if a conscious effort is made to maintain some of the spontaneity and protest components of sects, an institutionalized sect can result. Institutionalized sects are halfway between sects and denominations on the continuum of religious development. They have a mixture of sect-like and denomination-like characteristics. Hutterites and the Amish. Most of the well-known denominations of the U. Methodists, Baptists, and Seventh-day Adventists. Cults or New Religious Movements[ edit ] Cults are, like sects, new religious groups. But, unlike sects, they can form without breaking off from another religious group though they often do. The characteristic that most distinguishes cults from sects is that they are not advocating a return to pure religion but rather the embracement of something new or something that has been completely lost or forgotten e. Cults are also more likely to be led by charismatic leaders than are other religious groups and the charismatic leaders tend to be the individuals who bring forth the new or lost component that is the focal element of the cult. Falun Gong practitioners in London; Falun Gong is a new religious movement. Cults, like sects, often integrate elements of existing religious theologies, but cults tend to create more esoteric theologies from many sources. Cults emphasize the individual and individual peace. Cults tend to be located in urban centers where they can draw upon large populations for membership. Finally, cults tend to be transitory as they often dissolve upon the death or discrediting of their founder and charismatic leader. Cults, like sects, can develop into denominations. As cults grow, they bureaucratize and develop many of the characteristics of denominations. Some scholars are hesitant to grant cults denominational status because many cults maintain their more esoteric characteristics e. But given their closer semblance to denominations than to the cult type, it is more accurate to describe them as denominations. Some denominations in the U. Christian Science, and The Nation of Islam. Finally, it should be noted that there is a push in the social scientific study of religion to begin referring to cults as New Religious Movements or NRMs. The reasoning behind this is because cult has made its way into popular language as a derogatory label rather than as a specific type of religious group. Most religious people would do well to remember the social scientific meaning of the word cult and, in most cases, realize that three of the major world religions originated as cults, including: Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism. Theories of Religion[ edit ] Many of the early sociological theorists [2] [11] proposed theories attempting to explain

religion. In addition to these classical approaches to understanding religion, one modern explanation for the continued high levels of religiosity will be proposed along with a social psychological explanation that will attempt to explain the continued attraction of religion. These theories approach religion from slightly different perspectives, trying to explain: Given this approach, Durkheim proposed that religion has three major functions in society: For instance, religion can be used to justify terrorism and violence. In one sense, this still fits the structural-functional approach as it provides social cohesion among the members of one party in a conflict e. Marx argued that religion was actually a tool of the bourgeoisie to keep the proletariat content. Marx argued that religion is able to do this by promising rewards in the after-life rather than in this life. It is in this sense that Marx said, "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless circumstances. It is the opium of the people The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness" p. Thus, the social-conflict approach to religion highlights how it functions to maintain social inequality by providing a worldview that justifies oppression. Social Constructionist[ edit ] The social constructionist approach to religion presents a naturalistic explanation of the origins of religion. Berger [13] laid a framework for this approach, "Religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established. Put differently, religion is cosmization in a sacred mode.

**Chapter 5 : Religion and Social Justice - PCVolcan**

*religion and wellbeing is mediated by factors ranging from intrinsic purpose, to its social aspects, to its role as an insurance mechanism for people who face great adversity. We explore a number.*

Notes Religion and Its Role in Human Life To understand what religion is and what is its role in the life of men, we should first of all know its definition. Religion may briefly be defined as under: Religion is an all-round movement in the light of faith in Allah and a sense of responsibility for the formation of thought and belief, for the promotion of high principles of human morality for the establishment of good relations among members of the society and the elimination of every sort of undue discrimination. Keeping in view this definition, our need for religion and religious teachings is absolutely clear. To be a little more elaborate, it may be said that we require religion for the following reasons: Sanction for the Principles of Morality Religion provides a sanction for the principles of morality like justice, honesty, righteousness, brotherhood, equality, virtuousness, tolerance, sacrifice, help to the needy and other kindred virtues. These are the virtues without which, not only our life will lose its order and normalcy but it is very likely to be turned into a chaos. Of course, it is possible to acquire these moral and social qualities without the aid of religion. But certainly in the absence of firm religious belief, these values appear to lose their meaning and become a series of mere unbinding recommendations, because in such a case they do not amount to more than a piece of advice from a close friend in respect of which we are at full liberty to accept or reject. These qualities are rather based on an internal feeling and faith and are naturally beyond the scope of ordinary law. It is only faith in the existence of an Eternal Being, who knows man equally from within and without and who has full control over him, that cultivates these virtues within man and impels him to automatic righteousness and adherence to duty, and if need be, to make sacrifices for the sake of others. Power to Endure Adversities of Life Religion provides power for facing adversities and serves as a bulwark against undesirable reactions of despair and hopelessness. A religious man, with firm belief in Allah, and of His munificence, does not find himself in utter desperation even in the worst moments of his life, because he knows well that he is under the protection of a Being who is Almighty. With faith in the fact that every problem can be solved and every deadlock can be resolved with His help, he can overcome every disappointment and hopelessness. For this very reason, it very seldom happens that a truly religious man suffers from the acute reactions of desperation like suicide, nervous breakdown or psychic ailments which are products of frustration and defeatism. Behavior of a man who is not blessed with reliance on religion suffers from special epicurean confusion, and the life which has not the comforting support of religion, is an unbearable burden. Encounter with Ideological Vacuum Man cannot live in an ideological vacuum for long and as such his tendency towards a wrong ideology and false values becomes definite. His intellectual life is not filled with sound beliefs and healthy teachings. A superstitious and even destructive ideas may find way into his spiritual firmament and may for ever pollute his brain. All this originates from spiritual vacuum. It is religion which can fill the ideological and intellectual vacuum with sound teachings and can save one from a tendency towards absurdities and irrationalities. Hence, true understanding of religion can play an important role in combating superstitions, though it is true that even religion itself, if not understood correctly, may promote superstitions. An Aid to the Progress of Science and Knowledge Religion with its firm and sound teachings can be an effective factor in scientific progress, because its foundation has been laid on the solid bed-rock of "freedom of will" and on the fact that everybody is accountable for his own deeds. Every page of it, nay every line and every word of it, contains a glaring truth which stimulates us to further study and contemplation. This attitude towards the cosmos undoubtedly stimulates persistent thinking over the mechanism of creation and consequently, helps in the advancement of science and knowledge. In contrast, if we hold that this universe is the product of sheer mechanical factors having no intellect, there remains no plausible reason why we should make strenuous efforts to discover its secrets. In principle, a universe which is the outcome of the working of an unconscious machinery, can neither be well-designed nor mysterious. Albert Einstein was very true when he pointed out why great thinkers and discoverers are all interested in religion. He said that it was hard to find anyone among the great thinking

brains of the world who might not have a sort of religious feeling peculiar to him. That feeling was different from the religion of the man in the street. It has the form of a delightful wonder at the marvelously accurate system of the universe, which from time to time, unveils secrets in comparison with which all organized human thinking and research are rather weak and stale. This feeling illuminates the path of the life and efforts of a scientist and as he gains success and honor, it keeps him free from the deadweight of selfishness and pride. What a belief in the system of the universe and what a fascinating desire it was, he adds, that enabled Kepler and Newton to suffer for years in isolation and in complete silence in order to simplify and explain the laws of gravitation and planetary motion! No doubt, it is this very religious feeling that enabled the self-sacrificing and self-effacing men through long centuries, in spite of their apparent defeats and failures, to rise on their feet again and make fresh efforts. The world as I see The contemporary scientist, Abernethy, says that science for its own perfection should regard faith in God as one of its accepted principles. Thus a religious man, following the true teachings of religion, can more than anybody else, carry out research and discover the secrets of nature. According to the teachings of Islam, no man can be superior to another man on the basis of his color, race, descent, language or class. Islam recognizes only piety and knowledge as the touch-stones of superiority. Surely the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is he who is most pious. Anyhow, it cannot be denied that every kind of religious thought or belief cannot produce the de-sired results. Like every other intellectual movement, religion also requires correct guidance. Otherwise it assumes the form of superstition, monasticism, escape from positive life and pseudo-agnostic negative tendencies, the examples of which can even now be seen in the West, where people have become fed up with a mechanical life. It is only in such an atmosphere that for want of correct knowledge, religion is regarded as an obstructive factor. Man has been familiar with religion for such a long time that it covers the entire recorded history of human life and goes back into the depths of pre-historic times. Islam is in harmony with nature which Allah has designed for man. Durant, after a comparatively detailed discussion of atheism of certain people writes that despite all that he has mentioned, these are exceptional cases, and the old notion that "religion" is a phenomenon that generally extends to all human beings, is true. The question of religion in the view of a philosopher is one of the basic questions of history and psychology. He adds that, from time immemorial, religion has always gone hand in hand with human history. The idea of piety can never be removed from human heart. History of Civilization vol. It is obvious, that at a time, when the level of human thinking was low and the sciences had not made any remarkable progress, this internal feeling was in an incredible way mixed with superstition, but gradually with the progress of sciences on the one hand ,and persistent efforts and teachings of the prophets on the other, it was purified of adulterations and it regained its purity and originality. Anti-Religious Waves During the Past Centuries In these circumstances it looks a little surprising that during the past centuries, especially from 16th Century onward, a violent anti-religious wave has hit the Western countries and many of the liberal minded Europeans have dissociated themselves from the Church. Those who wanted to remain loyal to religion turned to some Eastern religions or to a sort of Gnosticism minus religion, while a large number of people were attracted by materialism and the like. But an inquiry into the roots of this subject indicates that in the special circumstances prevailing Europe, this phenomenon was not unexpected. Factors leading to anti-religious movements and tendency to materialism in Europe should be looked for in the perspective of the policy which the Church pursued with regard to the Renaissance and progress of natural sciences in various fields. When the Church in the middle ages, especially during the 13th to 15th centuries started a campaign against science which continued even to the 16th and 17th centuries and attempted to crush scientific movements through Inquisition, issued a papal decree to condemn science dragged people like Galileo to persecution and forced them to deny the motion of the earth. It is obvious what the reaction of the scientists to such teachings could be. They, being at the cross roads of sciences and religion of course religion as it was understood at that time and in that environment , naturally went for science, the firm basis of which they had personally observed and tested. Mistake in analogy and incorrect comparison of other religions to the special position of the Churches in the middle ages induced certain scientists to start a campaign against all religions and to reject them formally. But the study of scientific movement in Islam, which started from the very first century and bore fruit in the second and third centuries of the Hegira era, shows that in Muslim society the case was quite

different. This movement soon gave birth to the scientists like Hasan Ibn Haitham, the well-known Muslim Physicist, Jabir Ibn Hayyan. All historians in the East and the West, who have dealt with Islamic culture, are unanimously of the view that it gave rise to a wide-spread scientific movement whose influence over the Renaissance and the scientific movement of Europe was remarkable. Thus the factors which induced the liberal-minded in the West to dissociate themselves from religion, did not exist in the case of Islam. On the contrary, there were factors which worked in the opposite direction. In short Islamic movement had a special connection with World scientific movements, and for this very reason was the fountain-head of the vast development of sciences and knowledge. However it cannot be denied that disputes and dissensions among a section of Muslim people which in intensity from the fifth century Hijra onward, short-sightedness, non-realization of true teachings of Islam, apathy to progress and indifference to the spirit of the time, resulted in the backwardness of many Muslim countries. Another factor which complicated the problem was that Islam in the real sense was not introduced to the younger generation. Thus the constructive role of Islam in various fields gradually diminished. Now the position is that many young men think that Islam has always been in this present dismal state. Anyhow, it is certain that with the revival of Islamic teachings and their correct introduction, especially to the younger generation, it is still possible to revive the spirit of early Islamic movement.

**Religion and Philosophical Schools of Thought** All forms of religion censure every kind of materialism, whether it be in its simple shape or in the garb of dialectic materialism, which forms the basis of Marxism and Communism, because materialism maintains that this, universe is merely a set of undesigned and aimless happenings. Religion in censuring materialism, relies on a number of principles which are absolutely logical, because: The interpretation of the order of the universe advanced by materialistic schools is unscientific, for science in the course of its research, talks of well calculated and precise systems, which cannot be interpreted by accidental and chance happenings. Science acknowledges that the maker of this machine of the universe is the greatest physicist and chemist, most expert physician and the best anthropologist and cosmologist, because while performing his job, he visualized all scientific laws. Naturally he could not do so without having complete knowledge of them. It goes without saying that natural factors and natural developments can have no such knowledge at all. Materialism has accepted the doctrine of compulsion as one of its basic principles. It holds that every human action and every movement is the result of a sequence of compulsory causes. On, this basis, according to the materialistic point of view, all the efforts of man are like the movements of the wheels of a machine. It is obvious that the acceptance of this view goes against the idea of every social, moral or human responsibility. In contrast, religion accepts the principle of obligation and responsibility and thus lays the foundation of its teachings on the freedom of human will. It cannot be contradicted that the acceptance of the principle of compulsion gives a hard blow to dynamism and the sense of duty and responsibility. It also directly contributes to the expansion of crimes and aggressions, because the offenders can plead that they are not responsible for the crimes committed by them, for they were forced by the compulsion of environment, time and the way they were brought up. But there is no possibility of such evil effects if the principle of free will is accepted. With the acceptance of the domination of matter over all affairs of human life and the restriction of value only to the material values, the materialists have practically ousted moral values. They hold, that only material interests prevail over all social and international interests. The effect of this way of thinking is obvious for without adherence to such principles as philanthropy, tolerance, sacrifice, sincerity and love; no problems at world level can be solved. Belief in exclusive domination of matter obviously not compatible with these principles.

**Religion and Individual Freedom** Some people think that religion restricts individual freedom and disallows the fulfillment of some desires, whereas, in fact, the aim of religious teaching is not at all to put an end to logical freedom. Its aim is only to stop wastage of human energies and assets and to prevent their flow into improper and worthless channels. For example, if religion forbids the use of intoxicants, gambling and improper indulgence in sex, does so for the safety of the body and soul of the individual and for the maintenance of social order. This moral control is in keeping with the real spirit of freedom, for freedom means only that man should be able to take full advantage of the assets of existence to help in the evolution of the individual and the society. It does not at all mean squandering God-given energies and indulging in immoderation and libertinism. Religion supports every kind of freedom

that carries man forward towards evolution in various fields. Only this is what freedom, in the real sense, means. Anything else is libertinism. That is why religion allows man to use all good things in life, to wear any reasonable dress, to relish any good food and to take part in any healthy pastime. In short, it has allowed the use of all comforts and conveniences of life, and does not ask anyone to give up any such things. Who has forbidden the beautiful things of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the pure food?

**Chapter 6 : What purpose does religion serve in society? | Christian Forums**

*Religion provides social control, cohesion and purpose for people as well as another means of communication and gathering for individuals to interact and reaffirm social norms. ADVERTISEMENTS: Durkheim's concern about religion lay in the fact that it was one of the main agencies of solidarity and morality in society and was therefore parts of.*

The natural law concept existed long before Locke as a way of expressing the idea that there were certain moral truths that applied to all people, regardless of the particular place where they lived or the agreements they had made. The most important early contrast was between laws that were by nature, and thus generally applicable, and those that were conventional and operated only in those places where the particular convention had been established. This distinction is sometimes formulated as the difference between natural law and positive law. Natural law is also distinct from divine law in that the latter, in the Christian tradition, normally referred to those laws that God had directly revealed through prophets and other inspired writers. Thus some seventeenth-century commentators, Locke included, held that not all of the 10 commandments, much less the rest of the Old Testament law, were binding on all people. Thus there is no problem for Locke if the Bible commands a moral code that is stricter than the one that can be derived from natural law, but there is a real problem if the Bible teaches what is contrary to natural law. In practice, Locke avoided this problem because consistency with natural law was one of the criteria he used when deciding the proper interpretation of Biblical passages. In the century before Locke, the language of natural rights also gained prominence through the writings of such thinkers as Grotius, Hobbes, and Pufendorf. Whereas natural law emphasized duties, natural rights normally emphasized privileges or claims to which an individual was entitled. They point out that Locke defended a hedonist theory of human motivation Essay 2. Locke, they claim, recognizes natural law obligations only in those situations where our own preservation is not in conflict, further emphasizing that our right to preserve ourselves trumps any duties we may have. On the other end of the spectrum, more scholars have adopted the view of Dunn, Tully, and Ashcraft that it is natural law, not natural rights, that is primary. They hold that when Locke emphasized the right to life, liberty, and property he was primarily making a point about the duties we have toward other people: Most scholars also argue that Locke recognized a general duty to assist with the preservation of mankind, including a duty of charity to those who have no other way to procure their subsistence Two Treatises 1. These scholars regard duties as primary in Locke because rights exist to ensure that we are able to fulfill our duties. Simmons takes a position similar to the latter group, but claims that rights are not just the flip side of duties in Locke, nor merely a means to performing our duties. While these choices cannot violate natural law, they are not a mere means to fulfilling natural law either. Brian Tienrey questions whether one needs to prioritize natural law or natural right since both typically function as corollaries. He argues that modern natural rights theories are a development from medieval conceptions of natural law that included permissions to act or not act in certain ways. There have been some attempts to find a compromise between these positions. Adam Seagrave has gone a step further. God created human beings who are capable of having property rights with respect to one another on the basis of owning their labor. Another point of contestation has to do with the extent to which Locke thought natural law could, in fact, be known by reason. In the Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Locke defends a theory of moral knowledge that negates the possibility of innate ideas Essay Book 1 and claims that morality is capable of demonstration in the same way that Mathematics is Essay 3. Yet nowhere in any of his works does Locke make a full deduction of natural law from first premises. More than that, Locke at times seems to appeal to innate ideas in the Second Treatise 2. Strauss infers from this that the contradictions exist to show the attentive reader that Locke does not really believe in natural law at all. Laslett, more conservatively, simply says that Locke the philosopher and Locke the political writer should be kept very separate. Many scholars reject this position. That no one has deduced all of natural law from first principles does not mean that none of it has been deduced. The supposedly contradictory passages in the Two Treatises are far from decisive. While it is true that Locke does not provide a deduction in the Essay, it is not clear that he was trying to. Nonetheless, it must be admitted that Locke did not treat the topic of natural law as systematically as one might like. Attempts to

work out his theory in more detail with respect to its ground and its content must try to reconstruct it from scattered passages in many different texts. Unless these positions are maintained, the voluntarist argues, God becomes superfluous to morality since both the content and the binding force of morality can be explained without reference to God. The intellectualist replies that this understanding makes morality arbitrary and fails to explain why we have an obligation to obey God. With respect to the grounds and content of natural law, Locke is not completely clear. On the one hand, there are many instances where he makes statements that sound voluntarist to the effect that law requires a law giver with authority Essay 1. Locke also repeatedly insists in the Essays on the Law of Nature that created beings have an obligation to obey their creator ELN 6. On the other hand there are statements that seem to imply an external moral standard to which God must conform Two Treatises 2. Locke clearly wants to avoid the implication that the content of natural law is arbitrary. Several solutions have been proposed. One solution suggested by Herzog makes Locke an intellectualist by grounding our obligation to obey God on a prior duty of gratitude that exists independent of God. A second option, suggested by Simmons, is simply to take Locke as a voluntarist since that is where the preponderance of his statements point. A third option, suggested by Tuckness and implied by Grant , is to treat the question of voluntarism as having two different parts, grounds and content. With respect to content, divine reason and human reason must be sufficiently analogous that human beings can reason about what God likely wills. Others, such as Dunn, take Locke to be of only limited relevance to contemporary politics precisely because so many of his arguments depend on religious assumptions that are no longer widely shared. At times, he claims, Locke presents this principle in rule-consequentialist terms: At other times, Locke hints at a more Kantian justification that emphasizes the impropriety of treating our equals as if they were mere means to our ends. Waldron, in his most recent work on Locke, explores the opposite claim: With respect to the specific content of natural law, Locke never provides a comprehensive statement of what it requires. In the Two Treatises, Locke frequently states that the fundamental law of nature is that as much as possible mankind is to be preserved. Simmons argues that in Two Treatises 2. Libertarian interpreters of Locke tend to downplay duties of type 1 and 2. Locke presents a more extensive list in his earlier, and unpublished in his lifetime, Essays on the Law of Nature. Interestingly, Locke here includes praise and honor of the deity as required by natural law as well as what we might call good character qualities. At first glance it seems quite simple. On this account the state of nature is distinct from political society, where a legitimate government exists, and from a state of war where men fail to abide by the law of reason. Simmons presents an important challenge to this view. Simmons points out that the above statement is worded as a sufficient rather than necessary condition. Two individuals might be able, in the state of nature, to authorize a third to settle disputes between them without leaving the state of nature, since the third party would not have, for example, the power to legislate for the public good. Simmons also claims that other interpretations often fail to account for the fact that there are some people who live in states with legitimate governments who are nonetheless in the state of nature: He claims that the state of nature is a relational concept describing a particular set of moral relations that exist between particular people, rather than a description of a particular geographical territory. The state of nature is just the way of describing the moral rights and responsibilities that exist between people who have not consented to the adjudication of their disputes by the same legitimate government. The groups just mentioned either have not or cannot give consent, so they remain in the state of nature. Thus A may be in the state of nature with respect to B, but not with C. According to Simmons, since the state of nature is a moral account, it is compatible with a wide variety of social accounts without contradiction. If we know only that a group of people are in a state of nature, we know only the rights and responsibilities they have toward one another; we know nothing about whether they are rich or poor, peaceful or warlike. Instead, he argued that there are and have been people in the state of nature. How much it matters whether they have been or not will be discussed below under the topic of consent, since the central question is whether a good government can be legitimate even if it does not have the actual consent of the people who live under it; hypothetical contract and actual contract theories will tend to answer this question differently. There are important debates over what exactly Locke was trying to accomplish with his theory. One interpretation, advanced by C. Macpherson, sees Locke as a defender of unrestricted capitalist accumulation. Macpherson claims that as the argument

progresses, each of these restrictions is transcended. The spoilage restriction ceases to be a meaningful restriction with the invention of money because value can be stored in a medium that does not decay<sup>2</sup>. The sufficiency restriction is transcended because the creation of private property so increases productivity that even those who no longer have the opportunity to acquire land will have more opportunity to acquire what is necessary for life<sup>2</sup>. The third restriction, Macpherson argues, was not one Locke actually held at all. Locke, according to Macpherson, thus clearly recognized that labor can be alienated. He argues that its coherence depends upon the assumption of differential rationality between capitalists and wage-laborers and on the division of society into distinct classes. Because Locke was bound by these constraints, we are to understand him as including only property owners as voting members of society. Alan Ryan argued that since property for Locke includes life and liberty as well as estate Two Treatises<sup>2</sup>. The dispute between the two would then turn on whether Locke was using property in the more expansive sense in some of the crucial passages. While this duty is consistent with requiring the poor to work for low wages, it does undermine the claim that those who have wealth have no social duties to others. Previous accounts had focused on the claim that since persons own their own labor, when they mix their labor with that which is unowned it becomes their property. Robert Nozick criticized this argument with his famous example of mixing tomato juice one rightfully owns with the sea. When we mix what we own with what we do not, why should we think we gain property instead of losing it? Human beings are created in the image of God and share with God, though to a much lesser extent, the ability to shape and mold the physical environment in accordance with a rational pattern or plan. Only creating generates an absolute property right, and only God can create, but making is analogous to creating and creates an analogous, though weaker, right. Since Locke begins with the assumption that the world is owned by all, individual property is only justified if it can be shown that no one is made worse off by the appropriation. Where this condition is not met, those who are denied access to the good do have a legitimate objection to appropriation. Once land became scarce, property could only be legitimated by the creation of political society. Waldron claims that, contrary to Macpherson, Tully, and others, Locke did not recognize a sufficiency condition at all. Waldron takes Locke to be making a descriptive statement, not a normative one, about the condition that happens to have initially existed. Waldron thinks that the condition would lead Locke to the absurd conclusion that in circumstances of scarcity everyone must starve to death since no one would be able to obtain universal consent and any appropriation would make others worse off. In particular, it is the only way Locke can be thought to have provided some solution to the fact that the consent of all is needed to justify appropriation in the state of nature. If others are not harmed, they have no grounds to object and can be thought to consent, whereas if they are harmed, it is implausible to think of them as consenting. Sreenivasan does depart from Tully in some important respects. The disadvantage of this interpretation, as Sreenivasan admits, is that it saddles Locke with a flawed argument. Those who merely have the opportunity to labor for others at subsistence wages no longer have the liberty that individuals had before scarcity to benefit from the full surplus of value they create.

## Chapter 7 : Hobbes's Moral and Political Philosophy (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

*So, I ask you, what social purpose does religion serve, and does it have any social penalties? What personal benefits does religion serve and do they translate into social benefits? Lastly, what personal penalties does religion impose upon the individual?*

Explain the views of religion held by the conflict perspective. Explain the views of religion held by the symbolic interactionist perspective. What sociology teaches us about religion in our world. Upper Saddle River, NJ: These include a giving meaning and purpose to life, b reinforcing social unity and stability, c serving as an agent of social control of behavior, d promoting physical and psychological well-being, and e motivating people to work for positive social change. Conflict theory Religion reinforces and promotes social inequality and social conflict. It helps convince the poor to accept their lot in life, and it leads to hostility and violence motivated by religious differences. Symbolic interactionism This perspective focuses on the ways in which individuals interpret their religious experiences. It emphasizes that beliefs and practices are not sacred unless people regard them as such. First, religion gives meaning and purpose to life. Many things in life are difficult to understand. Second, religion reinforces social unity and stability. Religion strengthens social stability in at least two ways. First, it gives people a common set of beliefs and thus is an important agent of socialization see Chapter 4 "Socialization". Second, the communal practice of religion, as in houses of worship, brings people together physically, facilitates their communication and other social interaction, and thus strengthens their social bonds. The communal practice of religion in a house of worship brings people together and allows them to interact and communicate. In this way religion helps reinforce social unity and stability. Religion is an agent of social control and thus strengthens social order. Religion teaches people moral behavior and thus helps them learn how to be good members of society. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Ten Commandments are perhaps the most famous set of rules for moral behavior. A fourth function of religion is greater psychological and physical well-being. Religious faith and practice can enhance psychological well-being by being a source of comfort to people in times of distress and by enhancing their social interaction with others in places of worship. Many studies find that people of all ages, not just the elderly, are happier and more satisfied with their lives if they are religious. Religiosity also apparently promotes better physical health, and some studies even find that religious people tend to live longer than those who are not religious Moberg, We return to this function later. A final function of religion is that it may motivate people to work for positive social change. Religion played a central role in the development of the Southern civil rights movement a few decades ago. Religious beliefs motivated Martin Luther King Jr. Black churches in the South also served as settings in which the civil rights movement held meetings, recruited new members, and raised money Morris, The origins of the civil rights movement: Black communities organizing for change. Religion, Inequality, and Conflict Religion has all of these benefits, but, according to conflict theory, it can also reinforce and promote social inequality and social conflict. Selected writings in sociology and social philosophy T. By this he meant that religion, like a drug, makes people happy with their existing conditions. Marx repeatedly stressed that workers needed to rise up and overthrow the bourgeoisie. To do so, he said, they needed first to recognize that their poverty stemmed from their oppression by the bourgeoisie. But people who are religious, he said, tend to view their poverty in religious terms. Many people believe that if they endure their suffering, they will be rewarded in the afterlife. Their religious views lead them not to blame the capitalist class for their poverty and thus not to revolt. For these reasons, said Marx, religion leads the poor to accept their fate and helps maintain the existing system of social inequality. As Chapter 11 "Gender and Gender Inequality" discussed, religion also promotes gender inequality by presenting negative stereotypes about women and by reinforcing traditional views about their subordination to men Klassen, Neither biblical nor just: Southern Baptists and the subordination of women. Jews and other religious groups have been persecuted and killed since ancient times. Religion can be the source of social unity and cohesion, but over the centuries it also has led to persecution, torture, and wanton bloodshed. News reports going back since the s indicate a final problem that religion can cause, and that is sexual abuse, at least in the Catholic

Church. As you undoubtedly have heard, an unknown number of children were sexually abused by Catholic priests and deacons in the United States, Canada, and many other nations going back at least to the s. There is much evidence that the Church hierarchy did little or nothing to stop the abuse or to sanction the offenders who were committing it, and that they did not report it to law enforcement agencies. Various divisions of the Church have paid tens of millions of dollars to settle lawsuits. The nature and scope of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests and deacons in the United States: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Given these estimates, the number of children who were abused probably runs into the thousands.

**Symbolic Interactionism and Religion** While functional and conflict theories look at the macro aspects of religion and society, symbolic interactionism looks at the micro aspects. It examines the role that religion plays in our daily lives and the ways in which we interpret religious experiences. For example, it emphasizes that beliefs and practices are not sacred unless people regard them as such. Once we regard them as sacred, they take on special significance and give meaning to our lives. Symbolic interactionists study the ways in which people practice their faith and interact in houses of worship and other religious settings, and they study how and why religious faith and practice have positive consequences for individual psychological and physical well-being. The crescent and star, cross, and Star of David are symbols of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, respectively. The symbolic interactionist perspective emphasizes the ways in which individuals interpret their religious experiences and religious symbols. A crescent moon and a star are just two shapes in the sky, but together they constitute the international symbol of Islam. A Star of David consists of two superimposed triangles in the shape of a six-pointed star, but to Jews around the world it is a sign of their religious faith and a reminder of their history of persecution. Religious rituals and ceremonies also illustrate the symbolic interactionist approach. They can be deeply intense and can involve crying, laughing, screaming, trancelike conditions, a feeling of oneness with those around you, and other emotional and psychological states. For many people they can be transformative experiences, while for others they are not transformative but are deeply moving nonetheless.

**Key Takeaways** Religion ideally serves several functions. It gives meaning and purpose to life, reinforces social unity and stability, serves as an agent of social control, promotes psychological and physical well-being, and may motivate people to work for positive social change. The symbolic interactionist perspective emphasizes how religion affects the daily lives of individuals and how they interpret their religious experiences. For Your Review Of the several functions of religion that were discussed, which function do you think is the most important? Which of the three theoretical perspectives on religion makes the most sense to you?

**Chapter 8 : SparkNotes: Social Institutions: Religion**

*Sociology of religion is the study of the beliefs, practices and organizational forms of religion using the tools and methods of the discipline of www.nxgvision.com objective investigation may include the use of both quantitative methods (surveys, polls, demographic and census analysis) and qualitative approaches such as participant observation, interviewing, and analysis of archival, historical.*

It is regarded as his best and most mature work. Where suicide focused on a large amount of statistics from varying sources, the elementary forms of Religious life used one case study in depth, the Australian aborigines. Durkheim choose this group because he felt they represented the most basic, elementary forms of religion within a culture. Durkheim set out to do two things, established the fact that religion was not divinely or super naturally inspired and was in fact a product of society. Durkheim also sought to identify the common things that religion placed an emphasis upon, as well as what effects those religious beliefs had on the lives of all within a society. According to Durkheim, religion is something eminently social. Religious representations are collective representations which express collective reality. Recognizing the social origin of religion, Durkheim argued that religion acted as a source of solidarity. Religion provides a meaning for life. Durkheim saw it as a critical part of the social system. Religion provides social control, cohesion and purpose for people as well as another means of communication and gathering for individuals to interact and reaffirm social norms. Emile Durkheim has many purposes for studying elementary forms of Religion. Durkheim wanted to clear all its obsession by writing a book on religion before his death. His duty was to know the problem of the society. Durkheim was influenced by two scholars. In fact his ideas later contributed to the formation of sociological theory of religion. Durkheim developed the idea that study of religion in its most complex form can be understood, accomplished only when religion is studied in its most primitive and elementary forms. The confusion of the relationship between religion and science. According to Durkheim, Science itself reveals that religion is merely the transfiguration of society. Emile Durkheim has studied the Arunta tribes of Australian aborigines. To define religion, he says, we must first free the mind of all preconceived ideas of religion. He discards the notion that religion is concerned with the mysterious or supernatural phenomena, with gods, spirits and ghosts. He also points out that religion is as concerned with the ordinary as the extra-ordinary aspects of life. Definition of the Phenomenon, Religion: According to Durkheim, Religion refers to: The definition of religion at which Durkheim arrives is: Refutation of the previous explanations regarding religion: There were two interpretations contrary to Durkheim regarding religion. These two interpretations which he seeks to refute in the first part of the Book. In animism religious beliefs are held to be beliefs in spirits, these spirits being the transfiguration of the experience of men have of their two fold nature of body and soul. As for naturism it amounts to stating that men worship transfigured natural forces. The theory of animism is the work of E. According to Tylor, animism is essentially a belief in the spirit of the dead. Tylor argued that early men had a need to explain dreams, shadows, hallucinations, sleep and death. Very commonly the view is held that spirit visits a man in sleep, that too when he is experiencing dreams. Tylor asserted that the primitive man could hardly explain a dream in which he had certain actual experiences. For example he dreamt of a hunting adventure which resulted in his taking home the hunted animal and enjoying fine dinner. After waking up from the sleep, he found in reality that he had not left his cave. How could he explain this? The primitive man hence believed in a spiritual self which was separable from his bodily self and which could lead as independent existence. When once he got this idea he gradually started extending the same to regard other animate beings and inanimate objects, as possessing a spirit. In this way the primitive man was led to animism. Tylor is of the opinion that animism lies at the very basis of all religions. The ancestral ghosts which were endowed with super human powers, were believed to manipulate human affairs and natural forces. Hence primitive men had to keep the ancestral ghosts in good humour if they were to act in his behalf. Spencer said that the deceased tribal leaders of great power came to be eventually worshipped as gods. The belief in Gods originated in this way. Most of the anthropologists believe that the concept of animism is fundamental to all religion. It amounts to state that men worship transfigured natural forces. Believing worship of the nature as

supernatural or transcendental is called Naturism. Durkheim rejected both concepts: Because he felt that they failed to explain the universal key distinction between the sacred and the profane; 2. Because they tended to explain religion away by interpreting it as an illusion. That is the reductionistic fallacy. The explanation of religion which Durkheim is about to provide amounts according to him to save the reality of religion. For if man worships society transfigured, he worships an authentic reality; real forces. Religion is too permanent, too profound an experience not to correspond to a true reality; and this true reality is not God, then it must be the reality so to speak, immediately below God, namely society. Explanations of the types: According to Durkheim, Religion is a division of the world into two kinds of phenomena. The Profane The sacred refers to things human beings set apart; including religious beliefs, rites, deities or anything socially defined as requiring special religious treatment. Profane is just the opposite of Sacred, which is not sacred that is called profane. On one hand, the sphere of sacred is the area that pertains to the numerous, the transcendental, the extra-ordinary. On the other hand, the sphere of the profane refers to the realm of everyday utilitarian activities. When a number of sacred things maintain relations of co-ordination and sub-ordination with one another so as to form a system of the same kind, this body of corresponding beliefs and rites constitutes a religion. Objects and behaviors deemed sacred were considered part of the spiritual or religious realm. They were part of rites, objects of reverence or simply behaviors deemed special by religious beliefs. Those things deemed profane were everything else in the world that did not have a religious function or hold religious meaning. But while these two categories are rigidly defined and set apart, they interact with one another and depend on each other for survival. The sacred world cannot survive without the profane world to support it and give it life and vice versa. In general, those aspects of social life given moral superiority or reverence are considered sacred and all other aspects are part of the profane. Society creates religion by defining certain phenomena as sacred and others as profane. Those aspects of social reality that are defined as sacred that is that are set apart and deemed forbidden form the essence of religion. The rest are defined as profane-the everyday, the common place, the utilitarian, the mundane aspects of life. The Sacred brings out an attitude of reverence, respect, mystery, awe and honour. The respect accorded to certain phenomena transforms them from the profane to the sacred. The differentiation between sacred and profane is necessary but not sufficient conditions for the development of religion. Three other conditions are needed: Church There must be the development of a set of religious beliefs; a set of religious rites and a church. The interrelationships among the sacred beliefs, rites and church led Durkheim to give the definition of religion. Beliefs and rites or practices unite people in a social community by relating them to sacred things. This collective sharing of beliefs, rituals etc. Religion is society transfigured. Transfiguration means society is given the shape of god or religion which we believe and start worshipping. Belief refers to a type of conviction, making the people to do or accept which otherwise they shall not do or shall not accept. According to Durkheim, there are three types of ritual practices, following from specific sets of beliefs namely positive, negative and piacular practices or rites and practices of expiation. Positive practices refer to those which people are obliged to follow. Negative practices are reverse to positive. It refers to those practices which people are obliged not to follow or practise. Piacular practices refer to the practice of awarding punishment to those who have deviated from the norms and dictates of established beliefs. It is otherwise known as punitive practice. Durkheim has used the term church here in a symbolic sense. It does not refer to the place of worship. It is symbolic and does not contain its original beliefs. It is added to the concept of the sacred and to the system of beliefs in order to differentiate religion from magic which does not necessarily involve the consensus of the faithful in one church. Religion hence presupposes first the sacred; next the organisation of beliefs regarding the sacred into a group ; finally rites or practices which proceed in a more or less logical manner from the body of beliefs. General Theory of Religion: This general theory of religion is otherwise known as his theory of totemism. Instead of Animism or Naturism Durkheim took the totemism among the Australian tribes as the key concept to explain the origin of religion. According to him, Australian totemism is the most primitive and simple form of religion known to us today.

**Chapter 9 : Religion: 3 Most Important Functions of Religion**

*Generally, religion is regarded as an impediment in the path of social change but many religious groups, by criticizing existing rules of social morality and social injustice, and community or government actions, help in bringing about social change.*

In the early years of what later became the United States, Christian religious groups played an influential role in each of the British colonies, and most attempted to enforce strict religious observance through both colony governments and local town rules. Most attempted to enforce strict religious observance. Laws mandated that everyone attend a house of worship and pay taxes that funded the salaries of ministers. Although most colonists considered themselves Christians, this did not mean that they lived in a culture of religious unity. Instead, differing Christian groups often believed that their own practices and faiths provided unique values that needed protection against those who disagreed, driving a need for rule and regulation. In Great Britain, the Protestant Anglican church had split into bitter divisions among traditional Anglicans and the reforming Puritans, contributing to an English civil war in the 17th century. In the British colonies, differences among Puritan and Anglican remained. Between Anglicanism and Congregationalism, an offshoot of the English Puritan movement, established themselves as the main organized denominations in the majority of the colonies. In some areas, women accounted for no more than a quarter of the population, and given the relatively small number of conventional households and the chronic shortage of clergymen, religious life was haphazard and irregular for most. The fear of such practices can be gauged by the famous trials held in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692. As we might expect, established clergy discouraged these explorations. In turn, as the colonies became more settled, the influence of the clergy and their churches grew. Slavery—which was also firmly established and institutionalized between the 17th and 18th centuries—was also shaped by religion. If they received any Christian religious instructions, it was, more often than not, from their owners rather than in Sunday school. Local variations in Protestant practices and ethnic differences among the white settlers did foster a religious diversity. Wide distances, poor communication and transportation, bad weather, and the clerical shortage dictated religious variety from town to town and from region to region. With French Huguenots, Catholics, Jews, Dutch Calvinists, German Reformed pietists, Scottish Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, and other denominations arriving in growing numbers, most colonies with Anglican or Congregational establishments had little choice but to display some degree of religious tolerance. Only in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania was toleration rooted in principle rather than expedience. The meetinghouse, which served secular functions as well as religious, was a small wood building located in the center of town. People sat on hard wooden benches for most of the day, which was how long the church services usually lasted. These meeting houses became bigger and much less crude as the population grew after the 17th century. Steeples grew, bells were introduced, and some churches grew big enough to host as many as one thousand worshippers. After the 17th century, with many more churches and clerical bodies emerging, religion in New England became more organized and attendance more uniformly enforced. In even sharper contrast to the other colonies, in New England most newborns were baptized by the church, and church attendance rose in some areas to 70 percent of the adult population. The New England colonists—with the exception of Rhode Island—were predominantly Puritans, who, by and large, led strict religious lives. The clergy was highly educated and devoted to the study and teaching of both Scripture and the natural sciences. The Puritan leadership and gentry, especially in Massachusetts and Connecticut, integrated their version of Protestantism into their political structure. Government in these colonies contained elements of theocracy, asserting that leaders and officials derived that authority from divine guidance and that civil authority ought to be used to enforce religious conformity. Their laws assumed that citizens who strayed away from conventional religious customs were a threat to civil order and should be punished for their nonconformity. Despite many affinities with the established Church of England, New England churches operated quite differently from the older Anglican system in England. Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut had no church courts to levy fines on religious offenders, leaving that function to the civil magistrates. In those colonies, the civil government dealt harshly with religious dissenters, exiling the likes of

Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams for their outspoken criticism of Puritanism, and whipping Baptists or cropping the ears of Quakers for their determined efforts to proselytize. The Toleration Act, passed by the English Parliament in 1689, gave Quakers and several other denominations the right to build churches and to conduct public worship in the colonies. Mid-Atlantic and Southern Colonies Inhabitants of the middle and southern colonies went to churches whose style and decoration look more familiar to modern Americans than the plain New England meeting houses. They, too, would sit in church for most of the day on Sunday. After 1700, as remote outposts grew into towns and backwoods settlements became bustling commercial centers, Southern churches grew in size and splendor. Church attendance, abysmal as it was in the early days of the colonial period, became more consistent after 1700. Much like the north, this was the result of the proliferation of churches, new clerical codes and bodies, and a religion that became more organized and uniformly enforced. Toward the end of the colonial era, churchgoing reached at least 60 percent in all the colonies. The middle colonies saw a mixture of religions, including Quakers who founded Pennsylvania, Catholics, Lutherans, a few Jews, and others. The southern colonists were a mixture as well, including Baptists and Anglicans. In the Carolinas, Virginia, and Maryland which was originally founded as a haven for Catholics, the Church of England was recognized by law as the state church, and a portion of tax revenues went to support the parish and its priest. Virginia imposed laws obliging all to attend Anglican public worship. Baptist preachers were frequently arrested. Mobs physically attacked members of the sect, breaking up prayer meetings and sometimes beating participants. As a result, the 1700s and 1710s witnessed a rise in discontent and discord within the colony some argue that Virginian dissenters suffered some of the worst persecutions in antebellum America. With few limits on the influx of new colonists, Anglican citizens in those colonies needed to accept, however grudgingly, ethnically diverse groups of Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, members of the Dutch Reformed Church, and a variety of German Pietists. Maryland was founded by Cecilius Calvert in 1634 as a safe haven for Catholics. Clergy and buildings belonging to both the Catholic and Puritan religions were subsidized by a general tax. Their faith influenced the way they treated Indians, and they were the first to issue a public condemnation of slavery in America. In retrospect, the Great Awakening contributed to the revolutionary movement in a number of ways: In a surprising way, these principles sat very well with the basic beliefs of rational Protestants and deists. They also helped clarify their common objections to British civil and religious rule over the colonies, and provided both with arguments in favor of the separation of church and state. The political edge of this argument was that no human institution—religious or civil—could claim divine authority. At the core of this rational belief was the idea that God had endowed humans with reason so that they could tell the difference between right and wrong. Knowing the difference also meant that humans made free choices to sin or behave morally. The radicalization of this position led many rational dissenters to argue that intervention in human decisions by civil authorities undermined the special covenant between God and humankind. Many therefore advocated the separation of church and state. Taken further, the logic of these arguments led them to dismiss the divine authority claimed by the English kings, as well as the blind obedience compelled by such authority. Thus, by the 1700s, they mounted a two-pronged attack on England: Once the link to divine authority was broken, revolutionaries turned to Locke, Milton, and others, concluding that a government that abused its power and hurt the interests of its subjects was tyrannical and as such deserved to be replaced. Bonomi, *Under the Cape of Heaven*: Oxford University Press, 2002, 1. Bonomi, *Under the Cape of Heaven*, John Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*: Harvard University Press, 2002, 1. Ragosta, *Wellspring of Liberty*: Oxford University Press, 2002, 3. Ragosta, *Wellspring of Liberty*.