

# SCLY3

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Religion and Ideology

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# Theories of Religion

## Functionalist Theories

- Organic analogy
- Social order and solidarity
- **Durkheim**
  - Religious institutions play a central part in creating and maintaining value consensus, order, and solidarity
- Sacred and the profane (**Durkheim**)
  - Sacred – forbidden, feelings of awe and wonder, taboos and prohibitions
    - Powerful feelings in believers
    - Worshipping these is worshipping society itself
  - Profane – Ordinary things that have no special significance
  - Religions have special collective rituals and practices
  - Studied religion in its simplest form
    - Aboriginal Australians
    - Worshipped totems
    - Totem represents power of the group and the group itself
    - Makes us feel a part of something greater than ourselves (collective conscience)
  - × Did not conduct any primary research
- Cognitive functions of religion
  - **Durkheim** – Source of our cognitive capacities. Gives us basic concepts such as time, space and causation. Origin of human thought, reason and science
  - **Malinowski** – Helps us cope with emotional stress when... (Trobriand Islanders)
    - Outcome is important but uncontrollable
    - Times of life crises
- **Parsons** – Values and meaning
  - Legitimizes society's basic norms and values
  - Answers ultimate questions
  - × Can create conflict in multi-faith society
- **Bellah** – Civil religion
  - Unifies society, especially in multi-faith countries
  - Americanism
    - Sacrilises American ways of life

## Marxist Theories

- Religion as an ideology
  - The class that controls economic production also controls the production and distribution of ideas
  - Ideological weapon
  - Legitimizes suffering
  - **Lenin** – 'Spiritual gin'
  - **Marx** – 'Opium of the people'
  - × Ignores positive aspects of religion
  - × Neo-Marxism – Religion can hinder the ruling ideology
- Religion and alienation

- Alienation is the losing of control over something that one has produced
- Religion consoles people about the dehumanising nature of alienation
- Dulls the pain by promising afterlife
- **Althusser** – Also a Marxist – Sees alienation as unscientific

## Feminist Theories

- Examples of patriarchy in religion
  - Religious organisations – Male dominated. Women cannot be priests or rabbis. Armstrong sees this as strong evidence of marginalisation
  - Places of worship – Often segregate the genders. Taboos around childbirth and menstruation being polluting can also prevent participation
  - Sacred texts – Feature male gods and prophets, depicting women as lesser (e.g. original sin)
  - Religious laws and customs – Give women fewer rights than men, including divorce, dress code and abortion attitudes. Women are more penalised for sexual transgressions
  - × **Armstrong** – Early religions placed women at the centre
  - × **El Saadawi** – Religions only became Patriarchal when Patriarchal societies prevailed
- Religious Feminism - **Woodhead**
  - Westerners see the hijab as oppressive but it allows women to enter the public sphere while maintaining their culture and history
  - Religion can be used to gain power. E.g. in Christianity, men are taught to respect women
  - Position of women has changed. Women can now be C of E bishops

## Religion and Social Change

### Religion as a conservative force

1. Conservative in the sense that it encourages traditional beliefs about certain issues
  2. Conservative in the sense that it preserves things the way they are, maintaining status quo
- Religion's conservative beliefs
    - Most religions have conservative beliefs about moral issues and oppose changes that allow individuals more freedom
    - Family values i.e. division of labour, arranged marriages...
  - Religion's conservative functions
    - Marxists, feminists and functionalists all see religion as a conservative force in different ways
  - Religion and consensus
    - Functionalists – Maintains social stability and prevents disintegration
    - Religion reinforces capitalism via false class consciousness. Prevents revolution
    - Religion reinforces patriarchy, maintaining women's subordination in the family and society

## Weber – Religion as a force for social change

- The spirit of capitalism – Profit is motivated by desire for more profit
- Calvinist beliefs
  - Predestination – God decides who is in ‘the elect’
  - Divine transcendence – God is beyond this world and does not interfere with it. Gives Calvinists an ‘unprecedented inner loneliness’
  - Ascetism – Abstinence, self discipline
  - Vocation – Calling to god through constant work
- Led to Calvinists systematically gaining wealth which accumulated due to ascetic lifestyles. It was mostly reinvested back into the business
- × Kautsky – Capitalism came before Calvinism
- Hinduism and Confucianism
  - Hinduism – Ascetic, but did not produce capitalism because it was *other-worldly*
  - Confucianism – Directed its followers towards material reward, but was *not ascetic*

## Religion and social protest (Bruce)

Bruce – Investigated religion and social change, using the Civil Rights movement and the New Christian Right as examples

- Civil Rights Movement
  - Headed by the Martin Luther King who led the black clergy
  - Movement began in 1955, segregation was outlawed in 1964
  - Religion is an IDEOLOGICAL RESOURCE
    - Took the moral high ground – pointing out the hypocrisy of white clergy who supported segregation
    - Channelling dissent – MLK’s funeral was a rallying point for the cause
    - Honest broker – Respected by both sides, movement seen as above politics
    - Mobilising public opinion
- New Christian Right
  - Politically and morally conservative group that gained prominence in the 1960s
  - Traditional family values (ban sex ed, ban abortion, ban homosexuality...)
  - Uses televangelism
  - Bruce – was unsuccessful because it never had support of more than 15% of the population at its highest point. Democratic values of America meant most were comfortable legalising activities they opposed

## Marxism, Religion and Change

Most Marxists see large modern churches as conservative. However, they believe ideas – including religious ones – have RELATIVE AUTONOMY. Religion can have a DUAL CHARACTER, being a force for change as well as stability

Engels – Religion inhibits change by disguising inequality, but can also encourage social change

- Ernst Bloch – Principle of hope
  - Religion can be an expression of the PRINCIPLE OF HOPE
  - Images of utopia

- While images of hope can be deceptive, they can also sometimes be inspiration to drive for positive social change
- Liberation Theology
  - Catholic Church in Latin America was previously conservative
  - LT emerged in the 1960s
  - Supported the poor and oppressed while condemning military dictatorships
  - Priests led literacy programmes and raised political awareness
  - In the 1980s Pope John Paul II condemned LT for being too similar to Marxism
  - LT played an important part in resisting dictatorship and bringing about democracy
  - × **Maduro** – Neo-Marxist criticism of traditional Marxism. Religion helped to bring about democracy. HOWEVER, it did not threaten capitalism
  - Shows how the same religious organisation can be both conservative and radical
- Millenarian Movements
  - Desire to change things now, bring the Kingdom of Heaven to earth
  - **Worsley**
    - Expect total and imminent transformation of this world by supernatural means
    - Appeal mainly to the poor because they seek improvement the most
    - Cargo cults in Melanasia saw cargo as intended for the natives but diverted by the colonists. Saw that this was going to be overturned, creating widespread unrest
    - Millenarian movements developed into secular political movements that overthrew colonial rule in the '50s and '60s
- **Cramsci** – Hegemony
  - Ruling class maintains their control by ideas rather than force
  - Hegemony = ideological domination
  - '20s and '30s Catholic Church in Italy helped to support the ideas of the fascist regime
  - Religion can challenge the working class through ORGANIC INTELLECTUALS who support working class organisations
- **Billings** – Textile workers and coalminers
  - Compared a group of exploited coalminers and textile workers in '20s and '30s Kentucky
  - Both were working class and Protestant
  - Miners were more militant about workers' rights because they had organic intellectuals who were independent from the company

## Secularisation

### Secularisation in Britain

- **Crockett**
  - 1851 – 40% or more of the adult population attended church on Sundays
  - 19<sup>th</sup> Century was the “golden age” of religiosity
- **Wilson**
  - Western societies are undergoing a process of secularisation
  - “Religious beliefs, practices and institutions lose social significance”
- Church attendance today
  - 6.3% attend on Sundays (2005), halving since the 1960s and falling

- Church weddings and baptisms are declining
- Less secularisation has been seen in America and elsewhere so secularisation isn't universal
- Religious beliefs today
  - More people claim to hold Christian beliefs than actually go to church
  - Religious belief is declining at the same rate as church attendance
  - **Gill et al**
    - Meta-analysis of over 100 national surveys from 1939 to 1996
    - Significant decline in belief in a personal god and teachings about the afterlife
  - Growth in small religious organisations has grown, but nowhere near as much as overall attendance has fallen
- Religious institutions today
  - **Bruce**
    - There is a steady and unremitting decline
    - Methodist church will fold by 2030
    - C of E will be a small voluntary organisation with a large amount of heritage property
    - Religion is relegated to the private sphere of the individual and the family
    - 1900 – 45k in clergy
    - 2000 – 34k in clergy: despite population growing
- Explanations for secularisation
  1. Rationalisation
    - **Weber** – Western society has been rationalising since the 16<sup>th</sup> Century
      - 16<sup>th</sup> C Protestant Reformation undermined religious views, replacing it with a scientific outlook
      - Prior to this, the world was seen as an enchanted garden that worked by supernatural powers
      - Disenchantment – Things were seen as measurable and predictable. Science does not generally directly contradict religion but it REDUCES SCOPE FOR RELIGIOUS EXPLANATIONS
      - Technological worldview – People relied on science and medicine rather than prayer
  2. Structural differentiation
    - **Parsons** – This is a process that occurs with industrialisation as many specialised institutions develop to carry out the different functions previously performed by a single institution (religion)
    - **Bruce** – Agrees that there has been a separation, religion is now a private choice
  3. Social and cultural diversity
    - **Wilson** – Industrialisation broke apart unified communities
    - **Bruce** – Industrialisation created loose-knit urban centres with diverse beliefs, undermining all religions
    - More individualism = less community led belief
    - × **Aldridge** – Community does not have to be in one place, it can give identity on a global scale e.g. Jewish communities. Also, Pentecostal churches thrive in urban areas
  4. Religious diversity
    - **Berger**
      - Middle ages, Catholic church had monopoly

- Religious diversity (from 16<sup>th</sup> C Protestant Reformation), number and variety of religious organisations has grown, each with different versions of the truth
- Undermines religion's PLAUSIBILITY STRUCTURE
- 5. Cultural defence and cultural transition (counter trends)
  - **Bruce**
    - Cultural defence – Focus for defence in the face of an external force e.g. Catholicism in Poland during fall of communism
    - Cultural transition – Sense of community for ethnic groups living in an alien culture
- The spiritual revolution
  - NAMs
  - **Woodhead** – Kendal project
    - Congregational domain
    - Holistic milieu
    - 7.9% attended church
    - 1.6% took part in spiritual activities
    - Holistic milieu growing, congregational domain declining
    - NAMs have taken a spiritual turn, in line with individualistic society

## Secularisation in the USA

- **Wilson** – 45% of Americans attended church in 1962. However, this was an expression of the American way of life rather than religion. America is secular
- **Bruce** – Agrees with Wilson. America is becoming increasingly secular
  - Declining church attendance
    - Reportedly stable at about 40% since 1940
    - **Haddaway et al** – Actual attendance levels are lower than reported levels
  - Secularisation from within
    - Religion's purpose is now as a form of therapy rather than a substantive religion
  - Religious diversity and relativism
    - Practical relativism – accepting that others are entitled to different beliefs
    - **Lynd and Lynd** – 1920s, 95% thought Christianity was the one true religion. 1970s, 40% agreed
    - Absolutism has been eroded (link to Berger's idea on religious pluralism undermining plausibility structure)

## Religion, Renewal and Choice

### Postmodernity and Religion

- Believing without belonging
  - **Grace Davie** – Religion is just taking a more privatised form
    - Church attendance is seen as a choice rather than an obligation, explaining decline rate of churchgoing
    - Believing without belonging = believing in a religion but not going to church

- Vicarious religion – small number of clergy practice on behalf of a larger group
- Church is still used for rites of passage like baptisms, weddings and funerals
- × **British Social Attitudes Surveys** – Attendance AND belief are declining, contradicting Davie
- **Spiritual shopping**
  - **Danielle Harvieu-Leger** – Supports theme of believing without belonging
    - Cultural amnesia – Loss of collective memory
    - Where religion used to be passed down through generations, it is now lost
    - Equality has undermined the traditional church's power to impose religion, so young people no longer have a fixed religious identity
    - People have become spiritual shoppers as religion is now individualised and based on consumerism
    - 2 new religious types
      1. Pilgrims – Follow an individual path of self discovery
      2. Converts – Join groups that have a strong sense of belonging e.g. evangelical movements
- **Lyon** – Jesus in Disneyland
  - Religion in the postmodern society is changing
  - Relocation of religion
  - Media saturation, mass spreading of religious messages
  - Religions are disembedded from local contexts
  - Religion is de-institutionalised
  - Religion has relocated to the sphere of consumption
  - × **Bruce** – These new religions are weak with little impact on daily life, so are simply examples of secularisation
  - Re-enchantment is taking place

## Religious Market Theory/Rational Choice Theory

**Stark and Bainbridge** – There was no religious golden age and everyone will not be atheist in the future. Secularisation theory is Eurocentric

1. People are naturally religious and religion meets human needs
  2. People make rational choices based on costs and benefits of available religious options
- Religion provides us with supernatural compensators (e.g. eternal life after death)
  - There is a cycle of religion. As churches decline, a gap in the market is left for sects and cults. Secularisation theory only notes the decline in churches, not the rise in smaller religions
  - Competition leads to improvement of religious 'goods' on offer
  - America vs Europe
    - US – High religious competition, growth in the market
    - EU – Low competition, religious monopoly in most countries has led to a stagnant market
  - × **Norris and Inglehart** – In countries where the Catholic Church has had a long term monopoly (e.g. Venezuela), religious participation is high. Contradicts Religious Market Theory.

## Existential Security Theory

### Norris and Inglehart

- Claim Religious Market Theory only applies to America
- Level of religiosity is based on the degree of existential security: the extent to which the feeling of survival is secure enough that it can be taken for granted
- Explains higher religiosity in third world countries
- Explains America because America has a poor welfare system with high poverty (link to relative deprivation)
- Gill and Lundegaarde – The more a country spends on welfare, the lower its level of religious participation
- × Globalisation in India contradicts this (see below)

## Religion in a global context

### Religion and development

Secularisation theory – Development undermines religion

Weber – Religion can produce development (Calvinism)

- Globalisation in India - Nanda
  - India has rapidly grown a wealthy middle class in the last few decades
  - Hinduism is the religion of the 85%
  - Contrary to secularisation theory, well-educated Indians are more religious than rural, uneducated ones
  - Politicians and the media encourage the idea that recent success is due to Hindu values of the nation
  - Also contradicts existential security theory
  - Hinduism has become a civil religion

### Pentecostalism in Latin America

Berger – Pentecostalism in Latin America acts as a ‘functional equivalent’ to Weber’s protestant ethic

- Demands an ascetic lifestyle
- Something like this is needed to lift a society out of poverty. Can be led by an active minority

Pentecostalism: global and local

- Lehmann
  - In the last 5 centuries Christianity has globalised itself by expanding to South America and Africa
  - Colonisation imposed the religion, and the religion adapted to incorporate existing local beliefs rather than replacing them
  - ‘Africanisation’ of Christianity
- Pentecostalism also appeals to developing countries because it appeals to the poor majority

## Religious Fundamentalism

- Fundamentalism and cosmopolitanism
  - **Giddens** – Fundamentalists are traditionalists who wish to return to the fundamentals of their faith, with unquestioning belief in the truth of their scripture
    - Monopoly of truth
    - Rely on clergy to interpret texts and lay down rules
    - A reaction to globalisation which threatens norms
    - Is a contrast to Cosmopolitanism which sees lifestyle as a choice, emphasising personal improvement
- Monotheism and fundamentalism
  - **Bruce** – Also sees fundamentalism as a reaction to globalisation. However, he believes it is limited to monotheistic religions because polytheistic religions have no singular all powerful being or sacred text, widening scope for diversity of interpretation. He sees two origins of fundamentalism
    - WESTERN FUNDAMENTALISM – A reaction to change within a society
    - THIRD WORLD – A reaction to outside forces changing established ways of life

## Cultural Defence

**Bruce** – Religion unites a community in the face of an external threat, symbolising the group's collective identity. 2 key examples:

1. Poland – Catholic Church was a rallying point against communist rule
2. Iran – Imposed sharia law when western corporations installed pro-western regimes in the 60's and 70's

## Clash of Civilisations

### Huntington

- The world is divided into seven civilisations e.g. Western, Latin American, Islamic...
- Each civilisation has a shared cultural background
- Religion is shared across a civilisation
- Globalisation makes contact easier between civilisations, causing conflict
- Us vs Them
- × **Jackson** – This view is Orientalist. It stereotypes Eastern nations and people as untrustworthy or lesser

The real clash of civilisation...?

- World Values survey
  - Support for democracy is high in both the West and Muslim countries
  - Differences in attitudes towards traditional family values
- **Inglehart and Norris** – There is no agreement towards self-expression values (gender equality, freedom of speech etc.) which is the cause for clashes between Muslim societies and the West

# Organisations, Movements and Members

## Types of Organisations

- Church vs Sect (**Troeltsch**)
  - Church – Large, few demands, bureaucratic hierarchy, monopoly of truth, linked to state
  - Sect – Small, exclusive, hostile to wider society, recruit from marginalised groups, charismatic leader
- Denomination vs Cult (**Niebuhr**)
  - Denomination – Mid-point between church and sect. Less exclusive, broadly accepting of society's values, not linked to state, minor restrictions, tolerant of other religions
  - Cults – Least organised of all types. Highly individualistic, small and loose-knit, no sharply defined belief system. World-affirming
- New Religious Movements
  - E.g. Moonies, Scientology
  - **Wallis** – Key subtypes
    - World-rejecting NRMs – Members must break free from former life and live communally with restricted contact to outside world
    - World-accommodating NRMs – Often breakaways from existing churches. Neither rejecting nor accepting of the world. Members lead conventional lives
    - World-affirming NRMs – Lack many features of a traditional religion. Followers can access supernatural powers to help them in this worldly goals
- Sects vs Cults (**Stark and Bainbridge**)
  - Sects offer other-worldly benefits to those suffering economic or ethical deprivation
  - Cults offer this-worldly benefits, focusing on individual struggles
- Subtypes of cults (**Stark and Bainbridge**)
  - Audience cults – Least organised, no formal membership
  - Client cults – Consultant/client relationships, promising personal fulfilment
  - Cultic movements – More organised, exclusivist movements with high demands

## Explaining the Growth in Religious Movements

### Growth of sects and cults

- Marginality (**Weber**)
  - Offers solution to lack of status and disprivilege
  - Religious explanation for disadvantages
- Relative deprivation
  - People who are well off can FEEL deprived
  - E.g. Spiritual deprivation of the middle class
  - Stark and Bainbridge – It is these groups that break away from churches to sects
- Social change and NRMs (**Wilson**)
  - Periods of rapid change create normlessness, or anomie
  - Those most affected turn to sects
  - Social change stimulates growth of NRMs
  - World-rejecting NRMs – Social change from the '60s
  - World-affirming NRMs – A response to modernity, in line with need to achieve

### Lifetime of sects and NRMs

- **Niebuhr** – Denomination or death
  - Either they die out or compromise with the world
  - Second generations lack commitment, ascetic sects compromise for success, leader's death may cause collapse....
- **Stark and Bainbridge** – Sectarian cycle
  1. Schism – Split from church
  2. Initial fervour – Charismatic leadership
  3. Denominationalism – Cooling of fervour
  4. Establishment – Becomes world accepting
  5. Further schism
- × **Wilson** – Not all follow this cycle. Sects are either CONVERSIONIST, which compromises and becomes a denomination, ADVENTIST, which remains separate from society and dies out, ESTABLISHED, which remains alive throughout generations e.g. Amish

### The Growth of the New Age

**Heelas** – over 2k activities, over 146k practitioners in UK. Believe in Self-spirituality and de-traditionalisation

- × However, this is still relatively small compared to major churches

### Postmodernity and the New Age

**Drane** – New Age appeal is part of a shift towards POSTMODERN society. People lose faith in metanarratives

**Bruce** – The new Age is a feature of MODERN society: eclectic and individualistic (spiritual shopping)

**Heelas** – New Age and Modernity are linked in 4 ways...

1. Source of identity
2. Consumer culture
3. Rapid social change
4. Decline of organised religion

## Religiosity and Social Groups

### Gender and religiosity

- More women than men believe in God
  - 2005 – 1.8 million female churchgoers; 1.36 million men
  - **Bruce** – Twice as many women are involved in sects as men
  - **Heelas and Woodhead** – 80% of the holistic milieu was female
- Socialisation and the gender role
  - **Miller and Hoffman** – Women are more religious because they are socialised to be more passive, obedient and caring
  - **Davie** – Women have close proximity to birth and death and therefore ultimate questions
- Women and the new age
  - Women are more associated to the healing role, so may be more attracted to NAMs
  - **Bruce** – Child-rearing makes women less aggressive and more cooperative and caring, which fits in with NAMs

- **Brown** – NAMs appeal to women's wish for autonomy
- Compensation for deprivation
  - **Glock and Stark** – Deprivation is more common among women
    - Organismic deprivation – More likely to be physically and mentally ill
    - Ethical deprivation – Women are more morally conservative and so attracted to the conservatism of sects
    - Social deprivation – Women are more likely to be poor, and sects target the poor

### **Ethnicity and religiosity**

- Higher rates of religiosity for most minority groups
- Religion is rated as more important for Muslims, Hindus and black Christians
- Country of origin – Most immigrants come from countries with higher levels of religious practice
- Cultural defence – Offers cultural protection in a hostile environment
- Cultural transition – Easing transition into a new culture, provides support for minority groups. Becomes less relevant in the second and third generations

### **Age and religiosity**

- The older a person is, the more likely they are to attend religious services with 2 exceptions...
  - Under 15s – Made to attend by parents
  - Over 65s – More likely to be unable to attend due to sickness or disability
- Ageing effect – People turn to religion as they grow older and approach death, becoming more concerned with the afterlife
- Generational effect – Religion becomes less popular with each generation, creating an ageing religious population

## **Ideology and Science**

### **Science as a Belief System**

Science's key feature in this context is COGNITIVE POWER, which allows us to explain, predict and control the world

- × Science also causes problems through manufactured risks such as pollution, global warming, and nuclear warfare

### **Science as an open belief system**

**Popper** – Science is an 'open' belief system, open to scrutiny and testing

- Based on falsification, seeking to disprove existing theories
- Scientific knowledge is not absolute truth, it is often disproven

**Merton** – Science has a set of norms that promote growth of knowledge by encouraging openness (CUDOS)

- **Communism Knowledge** – Info must be shared with community
- **Universalism** – Science is based on universal, objective criteria
- **Disinterestedness** – Seeking knowledge for its own sake
- **Organised Scepticism** – Every theory is open to criticism

### **Closed belief systems**

**Horton** – Distinguishes between open and closed systems. Identifies religion as a closed belief system

- Uses 'get-out' clauses to prevent itself from being disproven (e.g. "God works in mysterious ways")
- **Polanyi** – Three devices to sustain itself in the face of contradicting evidence: circularity, subsidiary explanations, denying legitimacy to rival beliefs

### **Science as a closed system**

**Kuhn** – People work in paradigms

- Scientific revolution occurs when the evidence is overwhelming

### **Sociology of scientific knowledge**

Interpretivists – Scientific knowledge is socially constructed

- **Knorr-Cetina** – Scientific experimentation in labs is too far removed from the natural world
- **Woolgar** – Scientists have to persuade the scientific community to accept their interpretations of the world. A scientific fact is just a shared socially constructed belief

### **Marxist, Feminism and Postmodernism**

- Science serves the interests of dominant groups
  - Marxists – Ruling class
  - Feminists – Men
- Postmodernism rejects science's monopoly of truth
  - **Lyotard** – Just another meta-narrative

## **Ideology**

'Ideology' refers to a belief system, worldview or set of ideas. The term has negative connotations

### **Marxism and ideology**

- False class consciousness prevents revolution
- Economic factors such as fear of unemployment may keep workers from rebelling

### **Feminism and ideology**

- Patriarchal ideology
- Women often defined as inferior
- E.g. Menstruation often regarded as unclean, limiting women's religious practices