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Chapter 2: Historical Development of the Sociology of Religion

Test Bank

Multiple Choice

1. What major event brought about significant economic and social changes in society?
A. the Industrial Revolution
B. secularization
C. the Modern Revolution
D. urbanization
Ans: A

2. Which of the following theorists argued that religion would eventually disappear?
A. Robert Bellah
B. Emile Durkheim
C. Max Weber
D. Karl Marx
Ans: D

3. According to Durkheim, as societies expand and modernize, they move from more _____ to more _____.
A. religious; spiritual
B. spiritual; religious
C. collective; individual
D. individual; collective
Ans: C

4. Weber's understanding of modern society and religion centers is on _____.
A. secularization
B. rationalization
C. moral individualism
D. exploitation
Ans: B

5. Why did Karl Marx refer to religion as the "opium of the people?"
A. Religious participation simulates the feeling of being high.
B. Religion gives everyone important meaning.
C. Religion affected all social classes the same way.
D. Religion kept the working classes subdued.
Ans: D

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6. Which theorist argued that religious pluralism increases anxiety about the meaning of life?
A. Peter Berger
B. Robert Bellah
C. Mark Chaves
D. Emile Durkheim
Ans: A

7. According to Berger, which of the following is a consequence of secularization?
A. Religion becomes less visible while becoming more ingrained in social institutions.
B. More people will create their own religion.
C. Religion must be marketed as a commodity.
D. Societies become less religiously diverse.
Ans: C

8. Which of the following reinforce(s) the taken for grantedness of society?
A. plausibility structures
B. nomos
C. modernity
D. collective consciousness
Ans: A

9. On what do Bellah and Berger agree when it comes to secularization?
A. Religious symbols are becoming more complex over time.
B. Religious institutions have less direct influence on the secular world.
C. As a result, people are likely to make their own religion.
D. As a result, people find more meaning in science.
Ans: B

10. Robert Bellah views secularization as _____.
A. the loss of sacredness as social unity declines
B. the emergence of rationalism in religion
C. religious evolution resulting in greater complexity
D. an increase in supernaturalistic beliefs
Ans: C

11. According to Bellah, what does the rise of “Sheilaism” tell us about religion in the United States?
A. Individuals are reverting back to premodern forms of religion.
B. Individuals believe in themselves, not religious authority.
C. Individuals are engaging in self-worship.
D. Individuals are now creating their own systems of meaning.
Ans: D

12. When did new religious movements begin increasing in prominence?
A. 1920s

B. 1940s
C. 1960s
D. 1980s
Ans: C

13. Why did the rise of new religious movements challenge secularization theorists?
A. They mostly consisted of scientists.
B. These new movements were least likely to accommodate modernity.
C. They recruited people from established religious traditions
D. These new movements embraced modern advancements.
Ans: B

14. Warner's new religious paradigm focused on which country or geographic area?
A. Europe
B. Latin America
C. Africa
D. the United States
Ans: D

15. What is the central hypothesis of the religious economies model?
A. Religious participation will become more privatized over time.
B. Religious participation will become more public over time.
C. Religious pluralism will lead to lower levels of religious participation.
D. Religious pluralism will lead to higher levels of religious participation.
Ans: B

16. Which paradigm argues that religions will thrive in the absence of government involvement?
A. rational choice theory
B. neosecularization theory
C. strong program
D. the new paradigm
Ans: A

17. The strong program of religion argues that religion should be treated as _____.
A. a measure of individual identity
B. a measure of collective identity
C. a dependent variable
D. an independent variable
Ans: D

18. Which of the following is a dimension of secularization for some neosecularization theorists?
A. the spread of religious norms
B. the declining scope of religious authority
C. the decreased differentiation of religion from other institutions

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D. the collapse of plausibility structures
Ans: B

19. Many neosecularization theorists argue that in the modern world, society is differentiating and as a result, religion is _____.
A. disappearing
B. becoming more powerful
C. privatizing
D. becoming more collective
Ans: C

20. The decline of Sunday statutes in the United States provides evidence for which concept?
A. institutional differentiation
B. plausibility structure
C. religious economies model
D. Sheilaism
Ans: A

21. What do the future prospects for sociology of religion tell us about the current state of the field?
A. Most sociologists rely on practices over beliefs when studying religion.
B. Most sociologists focus on Western and Christian ideas about religion.
C. Most recent research studies everyday forms of religion.
D. Most recent research focuses on the rise of religious nones.
Ans: B

Essay

When it comes to essay questions, students sometimes write poorly because they are guessing about what the instructor wants, even if the question seems to be perfectly clear. For that reason we strongly recommend provision of an **audience** (so students know how much to assume in use of sociological vocabulary as well as how much must be made explicit) and **criteria for evaluation** (which is information that any writer needs to know.) Below are two sample statements that might be used as part of an essay question.

A. This essay calls for presentation and defense of an informed opinion. You should write for a well-educated reader, but one unfamiliar with sociological approaches to the study of religion. You will be graded on (a) provision of a clearly stated thesis, (b) the clarity and sophistication of your rationale, and (c) the ability to support your argument with strong evidence. Sophistication of rationale refers to awareness of the complexity of the issues. The side of the argument that you support is irrelevant to the grading criteria.

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B. Your audience for this essay should be senior sociology majors who know sociological vocabulary, but have never specifically studied the sociology of religion. The criteria for evaluation will be 1) accuracy of explanation, (2) clarity of illustrations or examples, and (3) thoroughness in exploring all dimensions of the issue.

Since some of these questions call for careful reflection, you might consider giving students a list of these and other essay questions in advance.

1. How did the industrial revolution transform society? What are the consequences of these transformations for religion?
Ans: The Industrial Revolution had a major impact on society, not just in terms of economic changes, but in terms of how society was organized, how people made money, and where people lived. The rise of factories meant that people had to leave their small farms and move to the city, where they worked for a wage instead of cultivating their farm to produce what they needed. People's lives were much more affected by the clock and by time than before. According to Marx, these changes meant that religion became a tool to oppress the masses whose labor was exploited by factory owners; thus religion played a role in legitimizing this change. One might also extend Berger's argument back to contend that living in close quarters likely meant exposure to people whose religious views differed from your own, which could result in the weakening of religious beliefs.

2. How has religion adapted to the larger social context in which religious groups new exist? Focus your discussion specifically on secularization and its impact on religion.
Ans: Berger notes several important consequences of secularization and of religious pluralism that would impact how religious groups respond. At the individual level, as people encounter others with different religious beliefs, they may feel less certain that their beliefs are the "right" ones. Recognizing that there may be choice of religion, religion as an institution may lose some of its power. In response, religious groups may adapt by trying to "market" themselves more, recognizing that people are choosing how they affiliate.

3. Using insights from sociologists discussed in this chapter, support or refute the following statement: "Secularization is occurring in North America."
Ans: Students can argue either perspective, as arguments for and against secularization are presented in the text. For evidence that North America is secularizing, students could point to claims made by neosecularization theorists who argue that secularization should be understood as the decline of religious authority and the rise of institutional differentiation. Therefore, one could argue that secularization is occurring, given that religious authority is not as salient as it once was. For evidence that North America is not secularizing, students can point to religious pluralism and the many different religious groups that continue to exist and to thrive. They might also note that individual religiosity remains important to many people; even if this religiosity does not take conventional forms, it nevertheless reflects the persistence of religious beliefs.

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4. Compare and contrast, Marx's, Weber's, and Durkheim's arguments about modernity and religion.
Ans: Marx, Weber, and Durkheim all agreed that changes to society were going to fundamentally change the social world, but they disagreed on the role religion would play in modernity. Marx argued that religion was used by the elite to keep the workers passive and accepting of their exploitation; to revolt, workers would have to throw off the illusion of religion, which would result in the next society having no religion. Durkheim focused more on where people found meaning and connection with others. In the past, solidarity came through shared rituals and collective consciousness. In modernity, individualism became more salient. He believed that religion would continue, but that it would be focused more on the individual. Finally, Weber argued that the rationalization accompanying modernity would lead to a separation of religion from other realms of influence. In this argument, similar to Durkheim, religion also persists in modernity, but it comes to occupy its own distinct part of society.

5. How is neosecularization distinct from traditional theories of secularization?
Ans: In classic theories of socialization, scholars argued that religion would slowly disappear from society. Berger argued that secularization would be caused by people of different religious groups living in the same society; realizing that theirs was not the only religion, they would begin to question their beliefs. Realizing that they could choose their religion, religion would decline in authority and relevance. Bellah makes a similar argument, but he argues that religious forms will evolve and gain greater complexity over time. In contrast, neosecularization theorists define secularization more precisely and focus on specific changes happening in religion. For example, Chaves defines secularization as a decline in religious authority; others define secularization as an increase in institutional differentiation, meaning that religion becomes more separated from other spheres of life, such as education and the government. These theories different from secularization theories in that neosecularization theorists emphasize the changing place and power of religion in society, rather than the eventual disappearance of religion.

6. Define differentiation, and explain how differentiation could occur at the macro-, meso-, and microlevels of society.
Ans: Differentiation refers to the development of distinct, specialized institutions that address particular needs in society; whereas in the past, religion touched on every sphere, with institutional differentiation, religion becomes confined to one sphere while other institutions, like the government and education, become more secular. We see this at the macrolevel with the decline in blue laws, also known as Sunday statutes. Religious beliefs are now far less likely to inform government policies, but some still persist today, like laws banning the sale of alcohol on Sundays. At the mesolevel, we see evidence if differentiation in higher education. Institutions that were founded as religious schools no longer affiliate with those denomination; indeed, most of the elite schools today have severed their formal ties with religious institutions. Finally, at the microlevel, people are more inclined to do what they want; religion no longer governs all of their decisions or all aspects of their lives. People have more control in deciding what particular religious beliefs they hold or practices they do.

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7. Explain what Berger means by the sacred canopy and how it connects to his argument about secularization.
Ans: Berger's concept of the sacred canopy is helpful for understanding his broader argument about secularization. By sacred canopy, Berger means the broader cosmos that provides meaning to our social world and that is perceived as stable and predictable. The sacred canopy is supported by plausibility structures, such as organizations, rituals, and more, that reinforce the sacredness and eternality of the canopy. This results in a shared meaning across society, giving people a sense of belonging and meaning for their lives. However, Berger argues that the sacred canopy gets threatened when multiple religions—and thus multiple sacred canopies—exist in the same society. When such religious pluralism occurs, Berger contends that people begin to question the infallibility of their beliefs and their sacred canopy, as they come to recognize that they are not the only people who claim to have the one true religion. This results in people realizing that they can choose from different religions, which results in an overall weakening of religion.

8. Summarize potential directions sociologists of religion could go in this post–paradigmatic era. Which direction do you think will be most relevant in the 21st century, and why?
Ans: The authors raise several important directions that sociologists of religion are likely to explore next. First, sociologists need to move beyond studying Christianity, as this focus on Christian traditions means that other types of religious beliefs are practices are overlooked and neglected. Second, they need to study outside of congregations to better understand where, how, and why people draw on religion in their daily lives. Third, they must move beyond studying beliefs to also studying diverse practices, including those that may not seem religious at first glance. Fourth, they should examine religion across borders, considering how globalization and immigration contribute to the spread and evolution of religion. Finally, sociologists of religion can concern themselves with the nonreligious, particularly the "nones." Students should pick one of these and elaborate further, perhaps using evidence from the text or observations from their life, on why they think this potential direction is likely to be most relevant.

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