

What Sociologists study about Religion

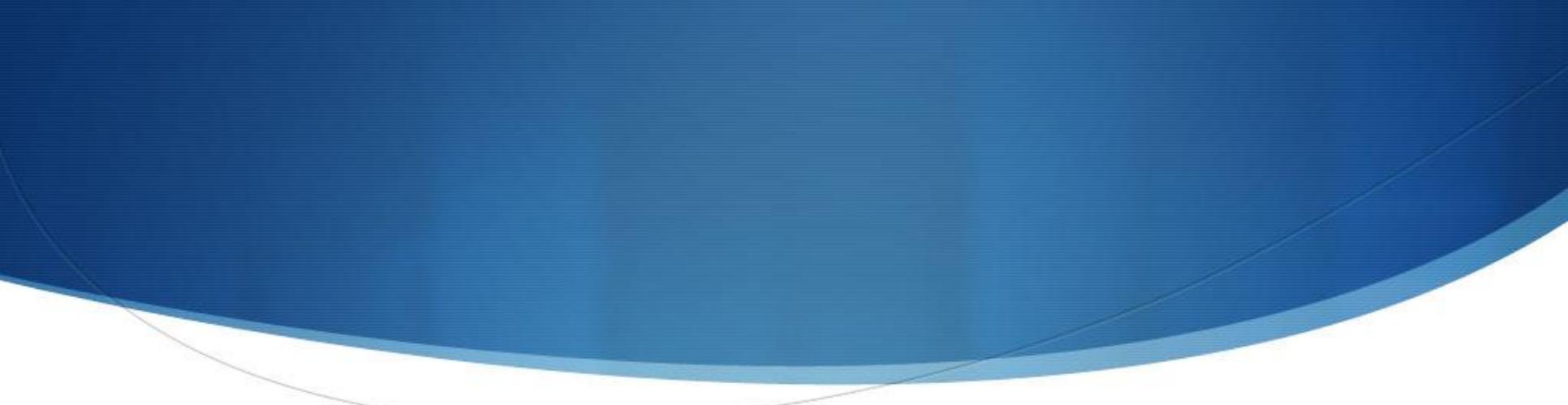


- ◆ When sociologists study religion they are guided by the scientific method and by the assumption that no religions are false.
- ◆ They must rid themselves of all preconceived notions of what religions should be.

- ◆ All religions have at least three essential characteristics : beliefs about the sacred and the profane, rituals and a community of worshippers.
- ◆ Sociologists have identified at least five broad types of religious organizations or communities of worshippers : ecclesiae, denominations, sects, established sects and cults.

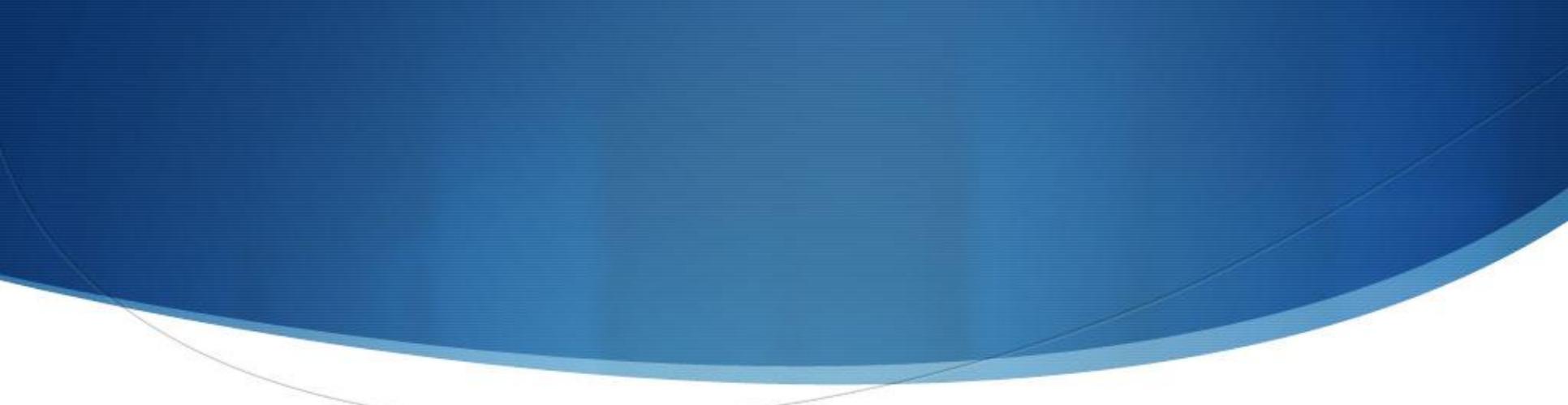
- ◆ Civil religion forges ties between religion and a nation's needs and political interests.
- ◆ National beliefs and rituals can inspire awe, respect and reverence for country.
- ◆ In times of war, presidents have woven the situation into a historical and mythological framework that gives the country's involvement moral justification and identity for the country.

- ◆ Some form of religion existed for as long as humans have lived encourages functionalists to maintain that religion serves some social functions .
- ◆ On the individual level people embrace religion in the face of uncertainty ,intolerable conditions and to achieve successful outcome.
- ◆ Religion promotes unity and solidarity in the social groups.

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- ◆ The variety of religious responses is endless because people play a fundamental role in determining what is sacred and how they should act in its presence.
 - ◆ At some level ,people worship what they or their ancestors have created.

- ◆ The functionalist perspective tends to under-estimate the negative ways in which people use religion.
- ◆ To claim that religion functions as an integrative force is to ignore the long history of wars between different religious groups and the many internal struggles between factions within the same religious group.

- ◆ Conflict theorists focus on how religion turns people's attention away from social and economic inequality and on religion's repressive, constraining and exploitative qualities.
- ◆ Religion is used to rationalize existing inequalities or to downplay their importance.

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- ◆ Religion is not always a sign or tool of oppression.
 - ◆ It has been used for protesting or working to change social and economic inequalities.

- ◆ Secularization and fundamentalism fuel each other's growth.
- ◆ In the face of uncertainty secular thinkers rely on human intervention or scientific explanation.
- ◆ Secularization a process by which religious influences on thought and behavior are reduced invites fundamentalist response.
- ◆ Fundamentalism is a belief in the timelessness of sacred writings .
- ◆ They conceive history as a process of decline and betrayal of fundamentalist principles.