

Ch. 1: A Secular Society

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0. Untitled introduction
- A. There is both over- and under-estimation of the importance of religion in U.S. politics
 - B. Lots of evidence that religion was and remains an important political factor in U.S. politics
 - 1. Presidential candidates
 - A. 1952 and 1980: divorce
 - B. 1928 and 1960: Catholicism
 - C. 2000: Judaism
 - 2. Domestic policy issues
 - A. 1860: slavery
 - B. 1896: immigration
 - C. 1928: prohibition
 - D. 1932: welfare
 - E. 1980: abortion and environmentalism
 - F. 1994: gays in the military
 - 3. Foreign policy issues
 - A. Nuclear weapons – proliferation and use
 - B. Islamic fundamentalism - Middle East and Asia

- I. The puzzle of religious vitality pp. 4-13
- A. “Neutral” theories of ***religious adaptation*** (*to modernizing society*)
 - 1. *Differentiation*
 - A. Definition: change in the *scope* of religion -- institutional specialization
 - B. Consequences:
 - (1) Religion retreats from its previously *dominant position* in other fields such as law, education, & medicine
 - (2) But, religion can still have *an important influence* in all these areas
 - 2. *Privatization*
 - A. Definition: change in *focus* of religion from a group to an individual phenomenon -- evolution of religion into a matter of personal judgment and choice
 - B. Consequences
 - (1) Greater diversity in religious beliefs means fewer theocracies
 - (2) But, religious denominations can still be important actors in pluralistic democracies
 - 3. *Desacralization*
 - A. Definition: changes in religious *thought processes*, i.e., tendency to describe and explain material reality in terms of natural (this-worldly) rather than supernatural (other-worldly) forces
 - B. Consequences
 - (1) Smaller role for religious values in decision making
 - (2) But, faith is not totally displaced by science and logic -- e.g., Einstein
 - 4. *Liberalization*
 - A. Definition: change in religious *tolerance*, i.e., ecumenicalism
 - B. Consequences
 - (1) Greater diversity in “acceptable” social behavior
 - (2) But, religious denominations can still be important teachers of social/econ./pol./moral values
 - B. “Naive” theories of ***inevitable religious decline***
 - 1. Modernization theory (industrial revolution)
 - A. Social/economic changes
 - (1) Geographic mobility
 - (2) Mass communication
 - (3) Urbanization
 - (4) Upward social mobility
 - B. Ideological changes
 - (1) Mass market economy: emphasis on material values
 - (2) Bureaucratization: emphasis on objective decision criteria
 - (3) Scientific education: emphasis on logical proof & empirical evidence

2. Marxist/socialist (class-conflict) theory (communist revolution)
 - A. Economic determinism
 - B. Stages of history
 - (1) Economic cooperation (primitive socialism)
 - (2) Economic exploitation
 - (a) Feudalism
 - (b) Mercantilism
 - (c) Capitalism
 - (3) Return to economic cooperation
 - (a) Revolution of the proletariat
 - (b) State socialism
 - (c) Advanced industrial socialism
 - C. Religion as the “opiate” of the oppressed
3. Behavioral theory (information revolution)
 - A. Premodern forces: irrational group prejudice
 - (1) Religion
 - (2) Race/ethnicity
 - (3) Region
 - (4) Gender
 - B. Modern forces: rational self-interest

II. The persistence of religion

- A. The U.S. as an exception to the modernization thesis Figure 1.1, p. 9
- B. Explanation offered by Norris & Inglehart (fn. 5, p. 22): because threats to economic security strengthen religion and because the U.S. has the highest degree of economic inequality & insecurity of any developed nation; therefore, it is not surprising that religiosity is high in the U.S.
- C. Yardsticks of religious commitment
 1. Institutions
 2. Practices Figure 1.2, p. 11; Figure 1.3, p. 12
 3. Beliefs

III. Stability or change?

- A. Wald & Calhoun-Brown argue that religion has adapted to changes in society
- B. Others argue that the role of religion in the U.S. has fundamentally changed
 1. Some argue religion has declined in influence
 2. Others argue religion has become more powerful

IV. Possible explanations for resiliency of religion in America

- A. Basic need: answers to questions about life and death
- B. Failure of substitutes
 1. Science
 - A. Technology creates new moral dilemmas
 - B. Empirical reason is not incompatible with religious faith
 2. Politics (especially totalitarian communism on left and totalitarian fascism on right)
 - A. Fails to solve perennial problems: material or spiritual
 - B. Abuses and inadequacies encourage reform movements

V. Why the United States?

- A. Cultural compatibility between religion and politics in the U.S.
 1. Definition: similar values
 2. Examples: individualism, voluntary affiliation, self-government,
- B. Social identity provided by religion in the U.S.
 1. Definition: sense of belonging with rules & guidelines
 2. Examples: antidote to geographic, social, and economic mobility
- C. Political independence of religion in the U.S.
 1. Definition: separation of church and state
 2. Examples: no-establishment and free-exercise clauses
- D. Religious pluralism in U.S. society
 1. Definition: overlapping and diverse group memberships
 2. Examples: all U.S. denominations are minority religions; Roman Catholic is largest at 25%