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Religion in Canada

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Religion was not a particular field of focus for sociology in Canada until relatively recently because it was generally understood understanding that Canadian society is a secular one, and is heavily influenced by a Marxist ideology. However, with increasing and diverse populations, religion becomes an important part of our identity; even the lack of a religion becomes an identity. For sociologists of religion, their goal is not to ask questions about whether or not God or any other deities really exist. Instead, their concern is with how people act out their beliefs and interact with others in society based on those beliefs.

The author begins by identifying Canada's two largest religious groups: Roman Catholics and Protestants. Both are considered mainstream Christianity. But the picture of religion is changing in Canada as more immigrants and other religious groups entering the Canadian landscape. Before moving too far ahead, the author defines the term "religion" in sociological terms. However, there is little consensus in what the official definition should be. Functional definitions tend to focus on what religion does for the social group and the individuals within that group. Conversely, substantive definitions are more concerned with what is considered religion and what is not.

The chapter then briefly explains the concept of new religious movements and their attributes. This is followed by a discussion of the different theories of religion and society, with a heavy concentration on the concept of secularization. Next, the author identifies the Quiet Revolution in Quebec as an important factor in this rise of secularism in Canadian history.

In the closing part of the chapter, the author examines religion in two respects: the law and gender in Canada. As mentioned earlier, more religions are being established in Canada, mostly through

immigration. With this change, certain Canadian laws come into conflict with some of the beliefs of the other religions and their practices. With gender, some religions place heavy restrictions on what women can do and wear. This often clashes with Canadian values and beliefs. Gender roles intersect with religion, but not only that, religion also presents itself as an institution of women's oppression. It is clear that despite a principle of having a separation of church and state, religion continues to cross paths with the law and institutions of Canada.

KEY TERMS

Believing without belonging
Civil religion
Cult
Hijab
Kippa

Kirpan
Labyrinth
Lived religion
New religious movements
Niqab

Organized religion
Quiet Revolution
Secularization

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is a civil religion? (p. 277)
2. Secularization theory is made up what three interwoven strands of argument? (p. 281)
3. What is liberation theology? (p. 280)
4. Although the Charter guarantees religious freedom and equality, in what ways are the guarantees limited by Section 1? (p. 283)
5. According to the text, what is the difference between organized religion and spirituality? (p. 281)
6. What are the functional definitions of religion? (p. 276)
7. What were some of the outcomes of the Quiet Revolution in Quebec? (pp. 281–282)
8. Why is it important to talk about women and gender? (p. 285)
9. Why does sociology have a key role to play in the study of religion in Canada? (p. 288)
10. What are religious seekers? (p. 281)

READINGS AND WEBSITES

Aldridge, Alan. (2013). *Religion in the contemporary world: A sociological introduction*. Malden, MA: Polity.

This book looks at religion in the world today. The book begins with looking at religion in terms of the social conflicts and debates that arise from the term and the works of Weber and Durk-

heim. The next part addresses the concepts of an increasingly secularized world through the rise of science, reason, and rationality. The author also identifies and examines other aspects of religion: sects, cults, and the potential dangers of brainwashing in religious movements. Lastly, in our contemporary society, religion is increasingly becoming seen as a traditional (and oppressive) way of thinking and living that subordinates women and those who identify themselves as members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community. The book examines how gender, sexuality, and the ideas of a spirit affect and shape our identities.

Clarke, Peter (ed). (2009). *The Sociology of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.

This book comprises of many areas in the sociology of religion and is an excellent starting point for those wanting to learn about a broad range of topics in this subfield. Part 1 introduces the reader to the theories in this area. Theorists such as Durkheim, Weber, Habermas, Bourdieu, and Foucault are discussed. Part 2 looks at the methodology and conceptual models in researching religion from a social science approach. Part 3 examines religion and morality, especially how science, religion, and atheism work in a social world. Part 4 looks at how religion works within the state and the laws surrounding them. Part 5 shifts to a broader scope of globalization and the increasing religious diversity in today's society. Part 6 focuses on the status and roles of those in the religious profession. Part 7 deals with the reproduction of religion and secularization through the family, media, and Internet. Part 8 looks at how religion has changed over the years with the rise of new religious movements and the idea of spirituality. Lastly, part 9 looks at religion in terms of health, ecology, altruism, and violence.

Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance. (2017). *Religious Tolerance*. Retrieved from <http://www.religioustolerance.org/>

The *Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance*, attempts to serve the people of the United States, Canada, and the rest of the English-speaking world in four areas: (1) disseminating accurate religious information; (2) exposing religious fraud, hatred and misinformation; (3) disseminating information on dozens of "hot" religious topics; and (4) promoting religious tolerance.

Universität Bremen. (2016). *Gamevironments*. [Online Journal]. Retrieved from <http://www.gameenvironments.uni-bremen.de/>

Video games today are unquestionable an important factor in cultural and religious socialization and the rapidly influential gaming sector of media brought about and requires a specific academic discourse. This new academic peer-reviewed online journal, the first of its kind, aims at establishing and fostering a platform for such discussions. It seeks to explore both established approaches and new frontiers of researching video games/gaming as related to religion, culture, and society.

Google Tech Talks. [Google]. (2007, Jul. 25). *Turning Cyberspace into Sacred Space*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zr4XyY-DJgQ>

Dr. Christopher Helland from Dalhousie University presents a talk in 2007 at the Googleplex in California on the developing nature of online religious activity.