

Religion

Chapter 16

Secularization and Religious Revival

Secularization: the process by which religion loses its influence over various spheres of social life

Dimensions:

- Membership of religious organizations
- Social influence, wealth and prestige
- Religiosity

Debates I

Membership of a religious organization may not mean anything to the individual and says nothing about levels of participation or belief...

...but it is still a marker of identity and affiliation which may be a significant factor in social solidarity

Debates II

The overall total of people in a society who are members of a religious organization says something about that organization's authority to speak in political and moral debates...

...but increasingly in Western societies the traditional churches are losing membership and smaller Christian sects, new age groups, Eastern ethical religions and the religions of immigrant groups such as Islam and Hinduism are gaining membership. Religious pluralism may say something about levels of belief but something very different about the influence of religion in social life.

Debates III

You don't need to be a member of a religious organization to believe in a god or afterlife...

...indeed, 'believing without belonging' is a term which has been used to describe the situation in contemporary Britain. However, what is the social significance of these kinds of individualized beliefs? Cut-off from social organization do they have any real significance in the organization and stability of the real world?



Religion within the UK

What is your religion?

(2001 census, England and Wales, %)

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Christian | 71.7 |
| Muslim | 3.0 |
| Hindu | 1.1 |
| Sikh | 0.6 |
| Jewish | 0.5 |
| Buddhist | 0.3 |
| Other | 0.3 |
| No religion | 14.8 |
| Not stated | 7.7 |

Religion within the UK

Christian
Communities,
2005 (in millions)

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| Anglican | 28.2 |
| Roman Catholic | 5.8 |
| Orthodox | 0.6 |
| Presbyterian | 2.9 |
| Baptist | 0.5 |
| Methodist | 1.2 |
| Non-Trinitarian | 1.4 |
| Total Christian | 41.9 |

Fundamentalism and Public Life

Fundamentalism: strict adherence to the literal interpretations of basic religious scriptures and texts, and the belief that the doctrine they reveal should be applied to all aspects of social, political and economic life

Christian Fundamentalism

- Belief in the divinity of Christ and in personal salvation through the acceptance of Christ as personal saviour
- Evangelical: to be 'born again' (in Christ)
- Rejection of liberal theologies
- In US growth in evangelical groups whilst mainstream 'liberal groups' show decline

Christian Fundamentalism II

- Response to rapid, globalized social change?
- Politically significant in issues to do with family, contraception, abortion and sexuality
- Politically significant in the re-election of former President George W. Bush