



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

COURSE CODE: CRS352

COURSE TITLE: SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION



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CRS352
SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

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Summary

Introduction

The issue of Religion has engaged the attention of scholars for a long period of time. Right from the medieval ages, explanations to social phenomenon were based on religious consideration. For example, criminals were considered to be possessed by demons. This line of thinking has persisted in some societies for a long period until the advent of modern science. Indeed, Religion permeates all facets of society.

This course will expose you to issues relating to Religion and how sociologists consider them. The course consists of three modules divided into 14 units. They include, course guide, concept and meaning of sociology and sociology of Religion, issues in sociology of Religion and the role of Religion in the society. The course Guide briefly explains to you what the course is all about, what course materials you will be using as you work your way through the course. It also gives you advice on the amount of time you may spend on each unit of the course so that you can complete the course successfully and in good time. The course guide provides some guidance on tutor-marked assignments, which will be made available in the assignment file. There are regular tutorial classes that are linked to the course. You are advised to attend the sessions.

What You Will Be Learning In This Course

The general aim of this course is to introduce you to how religion is involved in all aspects of societal life. During this course you will be learning the meaning of sociology and sociology of Religion, the nature of Religious beliefs, issues in sociology of Religion, the importance of Religion to society, Religion and violence in Nigeria as well as the role of Religion in politics. Also issues relating to Religion and culture as well as religion and social change will be examined.

Course Aims

This course aims generally at enabling you understand the relationship between religion and the society. Specifically, the course aims at:

- (i) Introducing you to the basic issues and concept in Sociology of Religion
- (ii) Explaining to you the relationship between Religion and society.
- (iii) Bringing to your understanding the role of religion in politics and development.

- (iv) Helping you understand the place of religion in violence in Nigeria.
- (v) Enabling you understand the major institutions of society as agencies of Religion

Course Objectives

In order to effectively achieve the aims set, the course sets its overall objectives which are always stated at the beginning of each unit. Always read these objectives so that you can check your progress. Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

- (i) Define sociology and Sociology of Religion.
- (ii) Explain the concepts of Religion and society.
- (iii) Describe the nature of Religious beliefs.
- (iv) Outline and explain the elements of Religion
- (v) Discuss the theories of Religion and society
- (vi) Explain the relationship between Religion and society
- (vii) Outline and explain the major institutions of society as agencies of Religion
- (viii) Discuss Religion as an aspect of culture
- (ix) Examine Religion and change in the society
- (x) Outline the importance of Religion to society
- (xi) Discuss Religion and violence in Nigeria
- (xii) Explain the role of Religion to the development of the society.

Working through this Course

To complete this course, you are required to read the study units thoroughly, read recommend text books and other materials provided by the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). Each unit has self Assessment Exercises and you may be required to submit assignments for assessment Purpose. The course should take you about 15 weeks to complete. You will find listed all the components of the course, what you have to do and how you should proceed to allocate your time to each unit in order to enable you complete the course on time and successfully too.

Course Materials

The major components of the course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study units
3. References

4. Assignment file
5. Presentation schedule

Study units

The study units in the course are as follows:

Module 1: Concept and Meaning of Sociology of Religion

Unit 1: Meaning of sociology and sociology of Religion.

Unit 2: Concepts of Religion and society.

Unit 3: The Nature of Religious beliefs

Unit 4: Elements of Religion.

Unit 5: Theories of Religion and society.

Module 2: Issues in Sociology of Religion

Unit 1: The Relationship between Religion and society

Unit 2: Major institutions of society as agencies of Religion

Unit 3: Religion and Culture

Unit 4: Religion and social change

Unit 5: Belief systems in Africa

Module 3: The Role of Religion in the Society

Unit 1: The importance of Religion to society

Unit 2: The importance of society to Religion

Unit 3: Religion and conflict in Nigeria

Unit 4: The role of Religion in politics

Every unit contains a list of references and further reading. Try to get as many as possible of those textbooks and materials listed. The textbooks and materials are meant to deepen your knowledge in the course.

Assignment File

In this file, you will find all the details of the work you must submit to your tutor for marking. The marks you obtain from these assignments will count towards the final mark you obtain for this course. Further information on assignments will be found in the Assignment file itself and this course guide in the section on assessment.

The Presentation Schedule

The presentation schedule included in your course materials gives you the important dates for the completion of your Tutor –Marked Assignments and attending tutorials. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignments by the due date. You should guard against falling behind in your work.

Assessment

There are three aspects to the assessment of the course. First, are self Assessment Exercises, and second is the tutor-marked assignment and third is a written examination. You are advised to be sincere in attempting the exercises. You are also expected to apply information, knowledge and skill that you have acquired during the course. The Assignments must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadlines stated in the presentation schedule and assessment file. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total course work. At the end of the course, you will need to sit for a final examination which will account for 70% of your total work.

Tutor-Marked Assignments

There are three tutor-marked assignments in this course. Each assignment counts 10% towards your total course work. Assignment questions for this course are contained in the assignment file. You will be able to complete your assignments from the information and materials contained in your reference books, reading and study units. You may also need to read and do further research on your own. When you complete each assignment, send it together with a TMA form to your tutor on time as indicated in the presentation schedule and assignment file.

Final Examination

The final examination for this course will be of 2 hour 15 minutes duration and will be marked over 70 marks of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self assessment, practice exercises and Tutor-Marked Assignments you have previously solved. All the areas of the course will be assessed. You may need to do thorough reading of the course material and even revise your Tutor- Marked Assignments and self-assessment Exercises to get yourself ready for the final examination. The final examination will cover all aspects of the course.

Course Marking Scheme

The table below shows how the actual course marking is broken down.

Table 1: Course Marking Scheme.

Assignment	Marks
Assignment 1-3	Three assignments, 10% each = 30% of the course mark
Final examination	70% of overall course mark
Total	100% of course marks

Course Overview

This table brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take to complete them and the assignments that follow them.

Table 2: Course Organizer

Unit	Title of work	Weeks Activity	assessment (of unit)
1	Meaning of sociology and sociology of Religion	2	1
2	Concepts of Religion and society	1	1
3	The nature of Religious beliefs	1	1
4	Elements of Religion	1	1
5	Theories of Religion and society	1	1
6	The Relationship between Religion and society	1	1
7	Major institutions of society as agencies of Religion	1	1
8	Religion and culture	1	1
9	Religion and social change	1	1
10	Belief systems in Africa	1	1
11	The importance of Religion to society	1	1
12	The importance of society to Religion	1	1
13	Religion and violence in Nigeria	1	1
14	The Role of Religion in politics	1	1

How to Get the Most from This Course

In distance learning programme, the study units replace the course lecturer. This is one of the great advantages for distance learning. You can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, time and place that you find convenient. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate points. Each of the study unit follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with other units and the course as a whole. Following this is a set of objectives that lets you know what you should be able to do as you complete studying the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study. When you finish studying a particular unit, go back to check if you have achieved the objectives. If you make a habit of doing this, you will significantly increase your chances of passing the course.

The main body of the unit guides you through the unit content material. Self-assessment exercises are spread throughout the units and answers are given at the end of the units. Working through these assessments will help you achieve the objectives for the unit and prepare you for the assignments and examination. The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into any trouble, telephone your tutor. Remember that your tutor's work is to help you.

1. Read this course guide thoroughly.
2. Organize a study schedule. Adhere to the time you are expected to spend on each unit
3. Upon creation of your own study schedule, do everything to remain faithful to it. The major reason why students fail is that they get behind in their course work. You should let your tutor know if you enter into difficulties.
4. Turn to unit 1 and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
5. Assemble the study materials. You will need your Textbooks as contained in the reference section.
6. Work through the unit. As you work through the unit you will know what other sources to consult for further information.
7. Keep in touch with your study centre. Up-to-date information about your course will be available there
8. Do your assignments diligently. They are made to help you achieve the objectives of the course.
9. Review the objectives of each unit to ensure that they are properly met. If you are in doubt consult your tutor.
10. When you are sure that you have met the objectives of a particular unit, you can now start work on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to face your study.
11. When you submit your assignment to your tutor, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. When the assignment is eventually returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments both on the tutor-marked assignment form, and also the written comments on the ordinary assignments.
12. When you finish studying the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Again cross check to make sure that you have achieved the unit's objectives.

Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials

There are 28 hours of tutorials (fourteen 2 hour sessions) provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials together with the name and phone number of

your tutor as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group. Each assignment will be marked by your tutor. Pay close attention to the comments your tutor might make on your assignment as these may help you in your progress. Ensure that your assignment gets to your tutor on or before due date. Your tutorials are very important therefore try and attend all of them. It is an opportunity to meet your tutor and get help inform of discussion over areas of difficulty encountered in the course of reading.

Summary

This course introduces you to the study of sociology of Religion. Religion permeates all facets of society and is therefore a useful tool in the stability and development of societies. The course therefore undertakes a sociological examination of the extent of involvement of religion in the cultural, social, economic, and political development of the people. It focuses on issues of violence, politics, culture, and development with particular reference to the Nigerian situation.



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MODULE1: Concept and Meaning of Sociology of Religion

UNIT 1: Meaning of Sociology and Sociology of Religion

UNIT 2: Concepts of Religion and Society

UNIT 3: The Nature of Religious Beliefs

UNIT 4: The Elements of Religion

UNIT 5: Theories of Religion and Society

UNIT 1: Meaning of Sociology and Sociology of Religion

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1.0 Introduction

This unit is a foundation unit in the course. It therefore covers definition of sociology generally and then sociology of religion in particular. The subject matter of sociology of religion is also discussed.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to;

- (i) Explain the meaning of sociology in general
- (ii) Explain the meaning of sociology of Religion
- (iii) Know the subject matter of sociology of Religion

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Meaning of Sociology

The word sociology was coined by the French Philosopher-Sociologist, Auguste Comte in 1837 (Peil:1977). Comte combined the Latin word “socio” (meaning society) with the Greek word “logy” (meaning science) to arrive at the term sociology which he defines as the science of society. To Comte, a science of the society was possible. This science should base its findings on systematic observation and classification of facts rather than casual, off hand observation, tradition, speculation and rumor. Sociology therefore is the scientific study of human, environmental, material and ideological components of society. It analyses human ideas, behavior, grouping, organizations, administration, law, crime and punishment. Human problems of hunger, disease, homelessness, unemployment, ignorance, divorce and violence engage the attention of Sociologist. The founding fathers of Sociology such as Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and Talcott Parsons have various ideas as to the focus of sociology. Comte was of the opinion that sociology should focus on social statics and social dynamics. Social statics refers to structures and functions of subsystems, institutions and persons. Social dynamics refers to the changes occasioned to institutions over time. The task of sociologists is therefore to make understandable the fundamental laws of nature and why people behave the way they do under different prevailing conditions.

Comte formulated the law of three stages of societal growth i.e theological, metaphysical and scientific. The theological stage is the

primitive or preliterate state where the powers of priest and the clergy dominated human society and explanations to events were purely religious. The metaphysical stage marks the period of enlightenment and reformation as well as reasoning. People began to seriously challenge the religious explanations for social phenomenon. The enlightenment scholars were pre-occupied with seeking answers to questions of nature through reasoning based on overt facts. The scientific stage is the stage of individual revolution and scientific discoveries as well as technological growth and development.

Following Comte, Herbert Spencer regard sociology as the study of society and likens society to a biological organism with interdependent but inter-related parts functioning independently and interdependently so as to ensure the survival of the entire system. Society as a system has sub-systems comprising of institutions and persons with status and roles necessary for their existence and survival. Durkheim considers the network of human relationship and societal growth as progressing from a simple undifferentiated form. Societal development is from homogeneous to highly differentiated or complex forms of industrial society. To Durkheim, society is a moral entity that is external to the individual but coerces his compliance through belief system into a moral community of adherents. Other founding fathers of sociology such as Karl Marx were equally concerned with the nature of human society and focused largely on the role of conflict in human societies that are highly stratified along class dimensions. The existence of classes in human societies makes conflict over material resources inevitable. Marx contended that all human societies have progressed from primitive communism, to slavery, to feudalism and to capitalism characterized by high exploitation. The continued exploitation of the masses will lead to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, resulting in socialism, a classless and egalitarian society.

Contrary to Marx, Weber considers sociology as dealing with the study of organizations and the role of ideas in the development of human society. He contended that modern contemporary societies are being organized especially along bureaucratic dimensions as demonstrated by his theory of Bureaucracy. The role of ideas is also significant in transforming the societies as was demonstrated in the protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism. Weber has also drawn the attention of sociologists to the study of power and authority relationships in the society which he called domination. He argued that legitimated power results in authority which leads to three types of domination. These are legal or rational, traditional and charismatic domination. Rational domination is the basis for modern bureaucracies with definite hierarchical arrangements and structures as well as functions. The traditional domination is through

customs and traditions, while that of charismatic is through gift of grace or extra-ordinary qualities of the individual or person.

Parsons also lend his contributions to sociology (Parsons: 1964). He was concerned with human behavior in the society which he christened social action. It is known as social action analysis which sociologists should also concern themselves with. Parsons therefore classify human behavior based on motivations for human action. He describes human behavior as been determined by the motives of the actor. Parsons further argued that for society to survive and develop it requires functional pre-requisites. These are identified to include; pattern maintenance, tension management, goal attainment, adaptation to environment and integration of the various components.

3.2 Factors that necessitated the emergence of Sociology

Before the Comtian era, Greek and Roman philosophers of old had reflected intellectually on the societies of their time. Notably among these social philosophers were Thomas Hobbe, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rosseau who focused their attention on the question of political and social life of the people. They examined the basis of the organization and administration of society, as well as the relationship between government and citizens. During the enlightenment era, violent revolutions became widespread in Europe. Notable among these revolutions were those of Germany, Britain, Italy and France. German unification brought wars in the country that revolutionaries the nation. The English revolution brought about by conflict between king James 1 and parliament in the 17th Century brought many changes in Great Britain. Before the revolution, it was the church that crowned the kings and gave them the supreme political power over the kingdoms. These positions, the revolution challenged vigorously and sought to change. There was also the French revolution in 1789 which saw the violent overthrow of king Louis xviii and the subsequent strengthening of parliament. The major demands of the French revolutionaries were liberty, equality and fraternity.

These developments notwithstanding, the major event that shaped the emergence and development of sociology was the industrial revolution in Britain. The industrial revolution brought about widespread changes which made people to ask fundamental questions about life and society generally. Among the changes that occur were the disruption that accompanied the industrialization process; societies becoming more chaotic and the pollution to environment emanating from industrial by-products. Peasant migration from rural to urban towns for factory

employment was witnessed. There was also the rise of cities with its anonymity. Also the collapse of religion as a source of moral authority, the demise of the old view of social order as ordained by God and the rise of explanations based on science change events. These changes occurring in traditional European societies necessitated the impetus that encouraged the emergence of sociology as a scientific discipline.

The emergence of sociology was further aided by the currency and popularity of the evolutionist theory of Charles Darwin (1859) which traced the history of all species of plants and animals from their earliest origins. The influence of Darwinic organic or biological evolution theory led such social philosophers as Herbert Spencer in England who sought to understand the developments of human society to apply the theory of organic evolution to human society. Other pioneers in the development of sociology included Lester Ward, an American who published his dynamic sociology in 1883. In this work Lester Ward advocated social progress through social action guided by sociologist.

Two other factors facilitated the development of sociology as a discipline. The first been its adoption of the scientific method of investigation in the study of social behavior. Sociology emerge as a scientific discipline using all the principles and methods of investigation as found in the other pure sciences of chemistry, physics, Biology etc. Auguste Comte was very zealous about developing science for the society and was instrumental in the development of rules of sociological method. The other factor for the development of sociology was the exposure of Europeans to the radically different societies of Africa, Asia and the Americans whose exposure revealed that different societies were at different levels of development. This difference they believe called for analysis and explanation. Sociology attained the status of an independent academic discipline in 1892 with the establishment of the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago, United States of America. In Africa, the first Department of Sociology was established at the University of Ghana in 1951. In 1895, the American Journal of Sociology was established to publish and document research and intellectual works of sociologists. By 1905, the American sociological society, a professional body of practitioners in the field of sociology came into existence.

3.3 Methodology of Sociological Study

The methodology of sociology as conceived by the founding gathers of the discipline, which has been summarized by John Rex refers

to classification and searching for laws, and establishment of causal relations and sequences.

Sociology should classify social facts in terms of observable characteristics of human behaviours, and institutions or organizations. This is normally based on empirical investigations. This method is similar to the biological sciences which deal largely with the classification of living things into animals and plants. Even amongst animals further classifications are made. The human body in particular is classified into various systems ; the digestive, excretory, skeletal, and reproductive etc. In a similar vein, the sociologists classify human society into various system e.g the political, economic, cultural, religious, amongst others.

In searching for laws, sociologists achieve it in two ways. Firstly, it is by the process of induction and secondary, it is by the process of deduction. Induction is the process of moving from a particular phenomenon to generalizations of the incidence of such phenomena. In other words, by observing characteristics of a group of people in understanding the behavior manifestations of the larger segments, or corporate groups in society. Deduction is by moving from the general characteristics to the particular phenomenon being observed, leading to the identification of similar characteristics or differences involved with the phenomenon under study. The manifest characteristics can thus be utilized to understand the unobservable of any given phenomenon.

Sociologists establish causal relations and sequences through cause and effects relationships. In understanding the relationships among variables, in terms of independent and dependent variable, the sociologists apply the causality model. In any given event or social occurrences, there is always cause and effects. The causes may not be the direct outcomes in terms of effects, nevertheless, that relationship can be or is being established in terms of causes and consequences of social behaviors or events or even social action.

In any case, sociology has applied and will continue to apply its methodology in the understanding of society and network of human relationships. The founding fathers were concerned or pre-occupied with these models of investigations as they relate to human behaviours and the social system. The study of man and his society requires these methods and approach, yet it cannot be as exact as in the case of the physical sciences. Moreover, sociology is a social science dealing with human beings who are complex and difficult to experiment under controlled laboratory situations to give solid results. Nevertheless, its objectivity and methodology give credence to the discipline as the science of society.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

Discuss the methodology of sociological enquiry.

3.4 Definition and Subject Matter of Sociology of Religion

Sociology of Religion is the study of the Society from a religious perspective. It is the systematic study of societal variables from a religious view. Sociology of religion therefore constitutes an integral part of a more general study of culture and knowledge. Culture is a total way of life of a people learned and passed from generation to generation. Religion is a cultural element and as found in all societies is powerful and pervasive. Religion is found to be at the centre of political, economic, social, educational, technological and scientific life of a people. Inbuilt in religion are theological and doctrinal teachings as well as values, laws, ethics, creeds and beliefs that shape the life of adherents in a society. Sociology of religion therefore is interested in understanding the extent of involvement, participation and contribution religion has made in patterning and providing direction in the society. It is interested in studying the extent to which religion has brought about change and development in the society. Sociology of Religion also examines the historical development of religion, its origin and the various forms religious beliefs have taken over time. Also, sociology of religion seeks to understand the impact of religion on the individual as well as institutions of the society. It tries to understand the impact of religion on families, marriages, politics, technology and development in a society. Indeed, the sociologist of religion studies the entire society paying particular attention to human interactions, relationships, beliefs, norms and values among the various religious groups in the society. It studies changes that have taken place among the various religious denominations found today and seek to understand the dynamics and dialectics of such changes including the direction such changes take. Sociologists of religion study social aggregates, groups and organizations as well as institutions, law and crime as they relate to religion. The discipline study conflict, deviance and tries to undertake research that will enhance peace, order and stability in the society.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

Define sociology of Religion and explain its subject matter.

4.0 Conclusion

Sociology is the scientific study of the society. The discipline emerged out of the desire to understand the chaotic nature of the society following the industrial revolution in Britain. The concern of early sociologists therefore was to maintain order and stability in the society. Sociology of Religion as one of the sub-disciplines of sociology is concerned with studying society from a religious perspective. The course is interested in understanding the degree to which religion impacts on the society generally.

5.0 Summary

In this Unit, we have dealt with definitions of Sociology and Sociology of Religion. We have discussed the circumstances under which Sociology emerged as a discipline. Sociology of Religion as a sub-discipline under the general discipline of Sociology cover all aspects of the society where humans are involved. It tries to look at social phenomenon from a religious perspective drawing conclusion from a holistic approach to issues of interaction, relationship and development as well as science, technology and law.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Identify and explain the factors that necessitated the emergence and development of sociology as a scientific discipline.

7.0 References/Further Reading

- Akpenpuun, D. (2009). An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion. Ibadan: John Archers Publishers.
- Peil, M. (1977). Consensus and Conflict in Africa Societies: An Introduction to Sociology. London: Longman Group Limited.
- Otite, O. and Onigu, O. (1979). An Introduction to Sociological Studies. Ibadan: Spectrum Educational Books.

MODULE 1: CONCEPT AND MEANING OF SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

UNIT 2: CONCEPTS OF RELIGION AND SOCIETY

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1.0 Introduction

We are still on the foundation units of this course. We therefore need to discuss the concept of Religion and society having discussed the meaning of Sociology and Sociology of Religion in the previous unit. Religion as a cultural element is powerful and permeates all facets of life. In this unit, we shall discuss the concept of religion and society with a view to familiarizing ourselves with these concepts. We will also look at the various types of societies.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to;

- (i) Define the concept of Religion
- (ii) Explain the meaning of the concept of society
- (iii) List and explain the types of society

3.0 Main content

3.1 The Concept of Religion

Religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things; things set apart and forbidden which unite into a single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them (Durkheim 1917). Religion is a cultural institution and is an instrument, for the satisfaction of needs. It is an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings. Religion comprises those aspects of our behavioural complexes that are organized around beliefs, in spiritual or super natural beings. Two concepts that are important in the definition of religion are the supernatural and the sacred. The concept of the super natural is basic and crucial in the definition of religion. The supernatural beings are of three main internal differentiate categories, God, spirits and ghosts (Otite: 1979). The great and supreme God is believed to have created the universe and control all that is in it. God, who is considered all powerful, rules the world from above and is accessible to believers. The most high God is found in many cultures of Africa. Among the Tiv of Benue, He is called Aondo; the creator, who is omnipotent and has absolute control and final authority over the universe.

Among the Nupe, the concept of God is the most basic and central concept in religious life. The Nupe call God “Soko” The one who dwells in the sky. God is generally believed to rule from the sky where he

resides. He is approached through intermediaries. Mbiti (1969) adds that the human intermediaries are of two kinds; human and spiritual beings. The human intermediaries consist of priests, diviners, ritual elders who lead prayers and making of sacrifices to God. Spiritual beings comprised of ancestral spirits, spirits of national heroes and even gods such as those of the sky, thunder, rivers, etc. Among African religion, spirit are varied. They are animated in rivers, road junctions, trees, houses and even mountains, such spirits are believed to be closer to man as guardian spirits.

The third category of supernatural beings is ghosts who are sometimes considered to be spirits of dead relatives. Ancestral spirits or ghosts are said to be souls freed from dead bodies that retain an active link with their living kinsmen. Based on their close relationship with the living and their previous existence in the society, they are considered different from spirits. They are believed to share the emotions of the living. Sociologists have traced the origin of religion to ancestor worship (Spencer: 1896). The living and their departed kinsmen are linked through emotions and religious practices.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

Define Religion

3.2 The Concept of Society

The world society emerged in the 16th century, derived from the French *société* which stemmed from the Latin *societas*, a “friendly association with others,” from *socius* meaning “companion, associate, comrade or business partner.” The Latin word is probably related to the verb *sequi*, “to follow,” and originally may have meant “follower.” In the social sciences, a society has been used to mean a group of people that form a semi-closed social system in which most interactions are with other individuals belonging to the group. Society is a group of people who share a common culture, occupy a particular territorial area and feel themselves to constitute a unified and distinct entity. It is a network of relationships that binds members together. This is because human beings live in groups known as communities whose members share common and peculiar culture. A community is a unit which has common boundaries. Communities require planning, organization, administration and control. In several ways there is stratification in the society. Members of a society are educated on how to think, act, work, relate to their neighbours and make decisions on their own. Society has several elements. As identified by Dzurgba (2009), these elements include; land, population, relationships, institutions and work. People need land for production of

food, water supply, housing, mineral resources, construction etc. people are the users of land and other resources found on land. Human beings interact with land to produce various useable commodities required for human development. Land has influential implications for all human activities. To be able to manifest its full potentialities man must interact with land in a manner as to enable land establish its importance and be useful to all.

Population is another important element of society. A society does not exist without people living in it. People provide labour which work on land to produce results. Therefore, the issue of knowledge and skills possessed by members of a society becomes very vital in considering the characteristics of a particular society. Again, the dimension of relationship becomes very vital in any society. In the course of interaction, people create various forms of relationships in the society. Such relationships exist in form of marriage, friendship, family and neighbours, business and working relationships. Institutions such as education, government, law, religion and health exist in the society so as to ensure proper social conduct for enhanced order and stability. Politics is also an important element of society. Political parties, house of assemblies, senate, House of Representatives and electoral bodies responsible for conduct of elections are sub-institutions of politics. These institutions are important in any society because they are related to power and the process of power acquisition in any society. Power is used for the control of resources both human and material. Political institutions carry out several valuable functions such as information dissemination, education, mobilization and governance.

Another important element of society that we will discuss here is history. The history of a people provides a store-house for their past and present events. It provides a window to understanding the present conditions of a people with a view to improving on their present predicaments. History provides the necessary information about the background of a people; their customs, values, institutions, technology, progress and development of society.

Work also forms an important element of society. Work engages a large number of people. While many people work as Agriculturist, many others work as civil servants, industrial workers, health workers etc. By engaging in various working activities, peoples earn salaries through which they provide food stuff and other needs for members of their families.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

Define the concept of society.

3.3 Types of Society

Sociology recognizes many types of society and defines these types of society in a very clear manner. Following are some of those types of society and their characteristics.

Tribal Society

A tribe is group of bands occupying a contiguous territory or territories having a feeling of unity deriving from numerous similarities in culture, frequent contacts and a certain community of interests. A tribe may also be defined as a social group with territorial affiliation that are endogamous with no specialization of functions ruled by tribal officers hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect recognizing social distance with other tribes. A large section of tribal population depends on agriculture for survival.

Characteristics of Tribal Society

The tribe inhabits and remains within definite and common topography. The members of a tribe possess a consciousness of mutual unity. The members of a tribe speak a common language. The members generally marry into their own group but now due to increased contact with outsiders there are instance of tribes marrying outsider as well. The tribes believe in ties of blood relationship between its members. They have faith in their having descended from a common, real or mythical, ancestor and hence believe in blood relationships with other members. Tribes follow their own political organization which maintains harmony. Religion is of great importance in the tribe. The tribal political and social organization is based on religion because they are granted religious sanctity and recognition.

Agrarian Society

The invention of plough marked the beginning of agrarian societies 6000 years back. According to Collins dictionary of Sociology Agrarian society refer to any form of society especially very traditional societies primarily based on agricultural and craft production rather than industrial production. Wallace and Wallace described agrarian societies as employing animal drawn ploughs to cultivate the land. The mode of production of the agrarian society that is cultivation distinguishes it from the hunter-gatherer society which produces none of its food. The theories

of Redfield and Tonnies are considered important. Robert Redfield talks about folk-urban continuum and little tradition and great tradition as his paramount focus in rural studies. Tonnies on the other hand discuss concepts of Gemeinschaft and Gessellschaft.

Industrial Society

The Industrial mode of production began some 250 years ago in Britain and from there it spread to the entire world. In the simplest sense an industrial society is a social system whose mode of production focuses primarily on finished goods manufactured with the aid of machinery. According to Wallace and Wallace, in industrial societies the largest portion of the labour force is involved in mechanized production of goods and services. The term industrial societies originated from Saint Simon who chose it to reflect the emerging central role of manufacturing industry in the 18th century Europe in contrast with previous pre-industrial and agrarian society.

Characteristics of Industrial Society

Industrial society is associated with the emergence of industrialization which transformed much of Europe and United States by replacing essentially agriculture based societies with industrial base on the use of machines and non-animal sources of energy to produce finished goods. Industrial societies are in a continual state of rapid change due to technological innovations. The high level of productivity in industrial societies further stimulates population growth where people start living in cities and urban areas.

New medical technologies and improved living standards serve to extend life expectancy. The division of labour becomes complex with the availability of specialized jobs. The status are achieved rather than ascribed. The family and kinship as social institutions are relegated to the background. There is breakup of joint family system and nuclear family units becomes prominent. The influence of religion diminishes as people hold many different and competing values and beliefs. The State assume central power in the industrial societies. Industrialism is associated with the widening gap between two social classes of 'haves' and 'have nots.' The rich or the capitalist class is seen as exploiting the class of the poor known as working class. However in most of the industrial societies there is steady reduction in social inequalities. Industrial societies have given rise to a number of secondary groups such as corporations, political parties, business houses and government bureaucracies, cultural and literary associations. The primary groups tend to lose their importance and secondary groups come to the prominence.

Post-Industrial Society

The concept of post-industrial society was first formulated in 1962 by D. Bell and subsequently elaborated in his seminar work 'Coming of post industrial society' (1974). It describes the economic and social changes in the late twentieth century. To Bell, theoretical knowledge forms the axial principle of society and is the source of innovation and policy formulation. In economy this is reflected in the decline of goods production and manufacturing as the main form of economic activity, to be replaced by services. With regard to the class structure, the new axial principle fosters the supremacy of professional and technical occupations which constitute a new class, in all spheres of economic, political and social. Decision making is influenced by new intellectual technologies and the new intellectual class. Other writers have also commented on the growing power of technocrats in economic and political life. Galbraith (1967) believes that power in the United states economy and therefore in American society as a whole lies in the hands of a technical bureaucracy of the techno-structure of large corporations.

Features of Post-Industrial Society

Post-Industrial societies are marked by:

- A declining manufacturing sector, resulting in de-industrialization.
- A large service sector
- An increase in the amount of information technology, often leading to an "information age". Information, knowledge, and creativity are the new raw materials of such an economy.

The industry aspect of a post-industrial economy is sent into less developed nations which manufacture what is needed at lower cost. This occurrence is typical of nations that industrialized in the past such as the United States and most Western European countries.

Self Assessment Exercise3

List and explain the various types of societies mentioned in this unit.

4.0 Conclusion

Religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relating to the sacred which unites all facets of life. Religion provides answers to questions beyond human comprehension and as such help pacify people of the society. The society is a group of people who share common culture, occupy a particular territorial area and constitute a distinct entity. The society has several elements which binds it together. These elements include institutions, history and work.

5.0 Summary

in this unit, we looked at the concepts in of Religion and society. Religion as an institution of the society is found in all societies of the world in one form or the other. The society provides the necessary platform for religion to operate. The society comprises of group of people who share common cultural antecedents and occupy a definite territorial area constituting a distinct entity. It has distinct elements that make it a unique phenomenon. The various types of societies include tribal, Agrarian, Industrial and post industrial societies.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. List and explain the characteristics of post industrial societies
2. Explain the characteristics of tribal society

7.0 References/ Further Reading

- Durkheim, E. (1917) *The Elementary forms of Religious life*. New york: collier Books Ltd.
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COURSE: SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

MOKULE 1: CONCEPT AND MEANING OF SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

UNIT 3: THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

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 - 3.2 The nature of religious beliefs
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1.0 Introduction

You have studied the meaning of Religion in the last unit before this one. Religion is based on the belief in the existence of supernatural beings who exert control and influence over people in the society. Now we are going to explain to you the nature of Religious beliefs. This will help you appreciate why issues of religion are often contentions

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to;

- (i) Explain the nature of religious beliefs
- (ii) Explain the fact that all religions of the world are based on one form of belief or the other.

3.0 Main content

3.1 The General Natural of Beliefs

Beliefs are strongly and deeply held ideas or views about a thing. Beliefs provide guidance to social behavior whether this be religious, scientific, or political behavior. In life, human beings are faced with a bewildering array of choices to take. We often have to cope with pressures and counter pressures to follow this or that alternative course of action. In the absence of beliefs we will probably find ourselves switching undecidedly between alternative courses of action and perhaps end up accomplishing nothing. Our beliefs provide us with direction and guidance and the sense of purpose that we need to decide and select a particular course of action. Belief in what we are doing, why we are doing it and how we are doing it, is necessary as a motivation factor within the individual.

The beliefs we hold also influence our perception and interpretation of the things going on around us. This means that our actions are based on beliefs. Beliefs differ from person to person, from group to group, and from society to society. Beliefs do not exist in isolation but normally belong to one or other of the complex belief system together that form part of a society's culture. Beliefs hang and connect together in a compound integrated way. Belief systems are learned simultaneously as we learn the other aspects of our culture in the process of socialization.

Beliefs can be verifiable or non-verifiable. Religious beliefs are largely non-verifiable (in terms of the “scientific method”) whether non-religious or secular beliefs are largely verifiable. Beliefs systems give rise to systems of values and ethics which are evaluative systems that specify how people ought to behave or what social good or evil they ought to pursue or refrain from. When such value or ethical system flow from a religious beliefs, they are referred to a religious morality, but when they derive from secular or non-religious sources they are called secular morality. These two typologies are however not mutually exclusive.

In a great number of cases secular ethics and religious morality support each other. Indeed much of secular ethics are derived from religious ethics. This is explained by the fact that both the religious and the secular are parts of the same whole which we call the social system. Being parts of the same whole one cannot be isolated from the other except in an analytic sense only.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

Discuss the general nature of belief

3.2 The Nature of Religious Beliefs.

Religion is a cultural phenomenon which reflects man’s attempts to come to terms with his environment particularly as it concerns those aspects of it which he does not understand such as death, pain and suffering. In their explanations of the origin of religion (in the form of animism” which means belief that the forces of nature e.g volcanoes, thunder, lightening etc. have supernatural power). Edward B. Tylor and F. Max Muller stated that religion originated to satisfy man’s intellectual nature, to meet his need to make sense of death, dreams and visions.

All societies have one form of religion or the other. In these different cultures, there exists different systems of religious beliefs. What is however common among the different belief systems is that in each case such beliefs are centered around a fundamental belief in the supernatural being or something which is above and beyond the natural world.

The human person is limited in his thought processes such that he can conceptualize phenomena only in terms which he is familiar with i.e in terms of the conditions operative in the natural world of which he personally is a part. Consequently, gods and spirits in the unseen supernatural world are perceived as good or evil, proud and jealous, they marry and beget children, can be offended and appeased when offended,

can revenge either in the present life or in the afterlife. These beliefs about the supernatural beings and the supernatural world are couched in the form of religious creeds and myths in order to make them meaningful. They present pictures of heaven, hell, hades, the elysian fields etc. and characterize them as places inhabited by God, satan or gods and spirits.

Religious beliefs formulated as creeds and myths also explain the link or relationship between the natural world and the supernatural world. Such relationships often hinge upon a belief in the ability of God or gods to assume human likeness or form and come into human communities to associate directly with mortal men. The supernatural being or beings are also believed to maintain contact with the natural world through an ability to beget children through human mothers and in such manner establish an indirect relationship with the human world.

In every society, there are certain objects (e.g tree, stone, animal) which are associated with religious beliefs and are regarded as sacred. Such objects are usually treated with reverence. What is sacred in one society may not be sacred in another society, but what is common among societies is that each share its peculiarities and people treat religion with some degree of seriousness.

4.0 Conclusion

Beliefs are found amongst all religions of the world. Beliefs provide the necessary foundations for religion. Beliefs are strongly held ideas of individuals in objects of the sacred. The phenomenon of belief is centered around the existence of a supernatural being that wields influence over adherents. The supernatural may be perceived as benevolent, wicked, protective and generous. Consequently, reverence, honour and adorations are accorded the object of worship based on the belief that he is capable of influencing decisions for the people of a society draws a dividing line between what is sacred and what is profane or secular. For Christians as an example, the cross is regarded as sacred, for the Jews the Ark of the covenant Muslims regard the Black stone of Kabah as sacred while the Hindus treat the cow as a sacred object.

It is also on record that most preliterate societies had one form of animal totem or the other. In some societies it is the turtle, the python, the monkey, fish, or whatever other animal a group has chosen as a sacred religious totem or object, and which it treats with reverential respect and an attitude of worship. To keep creeds, myths and sacred objects from losing their religious force in the minds of people, and thus keep them from dying away, they are backed up with religious rituals and ceremonies

which are occasions for re-enacting and reinforcing those religious beliefs.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, we discussed the nature of religious beliefs. Beliefs as a fundamental element of religion are based on the inability of man to provide concrete answers to basic questions of life. Individuals in society therefore hold beliefs relating to the existence of supernatural beings who are deified in form of objects of sacrilege. Such objects are worshipped and honoured with sacrifices and libations.

6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment

Discuss the nature of religious beliefs.

7.0 References/Further Reading

Eddiefloyd, M (2003), Basic sociology. Enugu: CIDJAP Press Ltd.

COURSE: SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

MODULE 1: Concept and Meaning of Sociology of Religion

UNIT 4: The Elements of Religion

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- 2.0 Objectives
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1.0 Introduction

We had discussed the nature of Religious beliefs in the previous unit. Religion, be it Christianity, Judaism, African traditional religion etc possessed elements that are very fundamental to its continued sustenance. We will therefore identify and discuss these basic elements of Religion

2.0 Objectives

At the end of the unit you should be able to:

- (i) Explain the various elements of Religion
- (ii) Define the role which these elements play in sustaining religion in the society

3.0 Main content

3.1 The structural elements of Religion

Religion all over the world has been found to comprise of four structural elements. The elements as identified by Eddiefloyd (2003) include; Belief, ritual, emotions and organization. Beliefs are strongly held conviction by the people who are adherents to a religion that their object of worship is capable of solving their problems. Religions of the world are based on belief and the recognition and creation of a sacred supernatural being. The sacred supernatural being is therefore venerated and worship by followers. Indeed, without belief, there would be no religion.

Ritual as an element of Religion refers to religious acts, ceremonial practices and customs that are geared towards the worship of the sacred. Religious rituals are a way of venerating and honouring the sacred. Rituals reaffirm the total commitment of adherents and reinforces their belief in the sacredness of the object being worshiped. They constitute practical avenues where members demonstrate their strong religious belief. Normally, religious rituals require the observance of certain special types of behaviour such as prayers, offering of sacrifices, observance of feast, meditations and the wearing of particular clothes (Eddiefloyd: 2003). Ritual observance is identified with groups and sects that practice particular religious doctrines. Among the Roman Catholic Churches in the world, several rituals exist inform of sacraments which members are obliged to partake, for example, the ritual of baptism, the consecration of the holy Eucharist, the genuflection in the church are seeing as rituals that must be imbibed by all practicing Catholics. A very important function of

ritual is that it brings faithful together for mutual stimulation and motivation and for reaffirming their belief in the power of the sacred object of worship. Rituals also provide an avenue for expression of emotional unity and open declaration that members have absolute commitment to the supernatural being which is being worshipped.

The third element of religion is emotions. This is a reference to the spirit of reverence, humility, ecstasy, excitement and even terror that is evoked in the believer as he presents himself in the presence of the sacred. The notion that one is present in the midst of the sacred evokes behavior that is considered appropriate for the occasion. When faithful engage in religious rituals and ceremonies, there is a tendency for them to become engrossed by the presence of the sacred. At such a period, individuals are emotionally attached to each other and may be persuaded to do whatever their leaders would ask them to do. This is because they are at this point overshadowed by the presence of the supernatural. You will find that most religious conflicts in Nigeria involving Christians and Muslims often commence immediately after religious meetings. They are made to be overwhelmed by the presence of the sacred as they are psyched to consider their fellow brothers who do not belong to their faith as unbelievers who deserve no fairer treatment but to be eliminated from the surface of the earth. To Christians, God is emotional as he does not want his own to suffer. Emotion, therefore becomes an important element of Religion

The fourth element of religion is organization. All Religions are characterized by some form of organization. There are trained officials; priests, cardinals, Bishops, pastors, church assistants, catechists, church leaders etc who occupy the church hierarchy with full powers and authority vested in them. There are also ordinances, rules and laws that govern the day to day conduct of members. Indeed, depending on the type of society one comes from, religion exhibit different degrees of organization. In developed societies of the west, religion is organized along Bureaucratic lines with a list of officials and hierarchy. There are rules that govern relationship among members. In developing societies however, religion is not differentiated in terms of organization.

Self Assessment Exercise 1.

Discuss ritual as an element of Religion.

4.0 Conclusion

Religion as an integral part of culture of a society has four basic structural elements. These elements include, belief, emotions, ritual and

organization. Beliefs provides the basic foundations for religious faith and trust in the ability of the supernatural to control and intervene in situations. Rituals provide an avenue for the re-enactment of religious belief and open proclamation of adherents in the ability of the object of worship. During rituals and ceremonies, emotions are easily displayed as adherents become overwhelmed by the presence of the sacred. Religions are also characterized by some form of organization. There is a hierarchy of officials and a body of rules and regulations which govern the conduct of members.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, we identified and explained the structural elements of Religion. These elements include Rituals, Belief, emotions and organization. These elements provide the necessary structural foundations for the continued relevance and sustenance of Religion in the society.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

List and explain the structural elements of Religion as discussed in this unit.

7.0 References/ Further Reading

Eddiefloyd, M.(2003) Basic sociology. Enugu: CIDJAP Press Ltd

Igbana, W. (2009) Sociology: A Comprehensive Introduction. Makurdi: selfers Academic Press Ltd

COURSE: SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

MOKULE 1: Concept and Meaning of Sociology of Religion

UNIT 5: Theories of Religion and Society

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- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Structural functionalist theory
 - 3.2 Marxist theory
 - 3.3 Social Interactionist theory
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- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 Introduction

In this chapter we shall be looking at theories of Religion and society. Being a concept that permeates all facets of life, scholars have attempted various theoretical explanations of Religion. We shall basically be looking at three of such theories. They include structural functionalism, Marxist theory and social interactionist theory.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to;

- (i) List the basic assumptions of structural functionalism and relate them to religion.
- (ii) Discuss Marxist theory of Religion
- (iii) Discuss the social interactionist theory of religion

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Structural functionalism

The theory of structural functionalism has its roots from the works of the founding fathers of sociology such as Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, and Talcott Parsons. Functionalism takes society as its unit of analysis. The theory likens society to a living organism that has different but interrelated systems which functions to maintain the whole. According to Herbert Spencer societies like living organism exhibit varying degrees of structural differentiation or complexity which can be understood in terms of the number of units or elements in the system. There exist greater interdependence of parts of the same system when it is internally differentiated than when it consists of identical elements. According to Spencer, greater differentiation of internal structures leads to greater integration of the whole system. Consequently, due to these differentials, the organism or system witness functional harmony of the structures and it is able to survive and endure overtime, by reducing the internal disharmony. Functionalism assumes that an entire way of life may lose its purpose or function through the process of change. According to Comte human understanding, development and societal changes have been through three major stages. This has been the basis for his law of three stages. These are the theological or fictitious stage, the metaphysical and the positive or scientific. The theological was the stage when social events were explained by means of superstition and religious beliefs. Events and social happenings were explained in terms of the sacred, deities, divinities, and

God. The meta physical stage marked the reasoning and logical deductions of arguments and discussions prevailed. The development to positive stage marked the period or era of scientific endeavours or scientific discoveries. Technological development and industrialization began. It was at this stage that Comte evolved his social physics which he later changed to Sociology placing it at the pinnacle of all the sciences. Sociology for Comte was to serve as a tool for human fulfilment and expression of worth so that man could reshape the workings of the society by adopting and applying those scientific tools to thoughts and human action and reconstruct society. Comte thought it necessary to give Sociology its pride of place among the sciences and the understanding of human society through social statics and dynamics. Social statics Comte(1839) further argued should aim at discovering the laws that would explain how whole societies have changed overtime. The theory assumes that society has sub systems and institutions such as the family, marriage, economy, politics, as well as religious institutions. The survival of these institutions depends on their ability to perform on the average net beneficial functions to the society. The theory also assumes that stability in the society is a function of value consensus. That people share common values and that account for the continued stability and order in the society. The theory further assumes that human society has certain basic needs called functional pre-requisites. These are the need for adaptation, goal maintenance, integration and pattern maintenance. These needs are met by the economic, political, legal, family, religious and educational systems respectively. In order to ensure the survival of the society, these functional pre-requisite must be met. Functionalists believe that religion is important in the society. That there is no society that is without one form of religious practice or the other. Functionalists insist that religion unites members of the society. Durkheim regards religion as purely a social phenomena. Society he argues, is a constraining moral force as well as a creative one with external constraints. It provides people with the moral rules and norms which they comply with and cultural resources to which they depend upon. By using the religious activities of the Australian Aborigines, Durkheim demonstrated that religion serves the function of integrating the society into a moral whole. The moral order set aside by the members of society becomes sacred and ritual activities are collective action of group solidarity and response. Society, according to Durkheim, exist over and above us known as moral entity or moral reality. Religious rituals increase group consciousness and loyalty. Religion reinforces a given social structure. It also restrains deviant behavior and strengthens social harmony and solidarity. Religion also promotes obedience and loyalty in the society. Durkheim believed that Religion is the worshipping of society. This led him to study Australian traditional religion among the

Aborigines. He studied the 'totem' and found that religion provided the thoughts, perceptions, attitude and actions of the people. Respect for sacred symbols is also reflected in social obligations and duties of adherents.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

Outline and explain the assumptions of functionalist theory of Religion.

3.2 Marxist Theory of Religion

Marxist theory of Religion has its roots from the works of Karl Marx and takes the orientation of dialectical materialism. Marx derived his concept of materialism from the word matter. He argued that, ideas derive their origin from matter which refers to material conditions of human existence. It is these material forces that determine thoughts, and ideas of men. He thus contended that 'it is not the consciousness of men that determines their social existence but on the contrary their social existence determines their consciousness'. Moreover, ideas do not exist in a vacuum, they must be related to a historical context, so that they can have sufficient bearing on social reality. The nature of social reality also changes over time. Hence his conclusion that human progress or social development must go through five major stages namely, primitive communalism, slavery, feudalism and the final stage communism. Hegel had earlier conceived of materialism as the movement of reality itself, reaching its completeness through the process of logical development. He believes that reality evolve from one stage to the other by the process of dialectics. It is this very idea that Max developed and arrived at his theory of dialectical materialism. Marx argued that reality evolved through contradictions i.e from thesis to Anti- thesis, then synthesis. Thesis is referring to affirmation, Anti-thesis i.e negation and contradiction then reconciliation i.e synthesis, bringing about the new social order. Dialectical materialism therefore, refers to the contradictions or conflicts and resolutions that characterize the material forces resulting to changes from one historical epoch to the other.

The peculiar feature of Marxists analysis of conflicts in society based on dialectics derives from the fact that he tempered philosophy with some degree of reality. Hegel, an idealist, believed that the external world i.e, reality is a mere reflection or embodiments of matter. This point of view is known as materialism, which has been the basis for Marx's dialectical materialism. According to him therefore, ideas are derived from matter. Ideas must be related in a historical context and to the

material world. It is in fact the material world that determines thoughts and ideas of men and women. The material world forces do not also exist in an unchanging and timeless fashion. They change through contradictions over historical period of time. This is primarily because material world today is different from that of the past centuries. It is this material world that is referred to as historical materialism. This is especially so when the ideas are backed with social action, which can significantly shape the society or nature of social reality.

Thus for Marx historical materialism as already indicated has been through five major stages namely slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism and finally communism. Each historical epoch has specifically designated mode of production forming the basis of relationships in the supernatural arrangements of the society. It is historical materialism that is the extension of the principles of dialectical materialism or theory of dialectics as already explained.

The mode of production is not static, but dynamic and it changes with historical development of society. When the existing structure accommodates further development of productive forces the old system of production is overthrown and a new mode arises, delineating new relations. According to Marx therefore, critical human differences are generated by socio-economic division of labour and relationship to the mode of production.

The character of the mode of production and social relations are determined by the level of development of the society and by the character of productive forces. Productive forces and production relations together constitute the mode of production. The various modes that exist over historical period of time succeed each other. For example, slavery mode was succeeded by feudal mode, then capitalist mode etc. Also contradictions often arise between the productive forces and the relations of production. This is because, the techniques, skills and working experience advance more constantly, whereas, the production relations change rather slowly, and behind the production forces.

Due to this unequal changes in the productive forces and the production relations, discrepancy arises and conflicts develop in the production relations since the obsolete production relations hinder further development of productive forces. Conflict therefore, leads to the destruction of obsolete production relations and to the replacement of new ones corresponding to the new character of the productive forces that have grown up. A new mode of production begins a new circle of development, which passes through the same process. Each stage corresponds to definite

mode of production, which also conditions the social, political and intellectual life of the society in general, as already indicated.

Consequently, Marxism is often criticized for deriving all other aspects of society from the economic activities of man in the society. Marx sees the interplay between the economic base of society, determined by the mode of production, with the supernatural. However, more than his contemporaries, Marx is credited with concrete attempt to formulate more universal laws that govern the society.

It has thus contributed largely to the study of general laws of society and detailed, empirical materials for sociologists and other social sciences. It has also demonstrated the linkages between historical and science, and the nature of human society based on materialism, created by economic forces at the base of society, determining every relationships. However, Marx has been accused of being a false prophet.

According to Marx (1930), man is an exclusive being that is born and developed in the society. He is socialized based on the complex series of interactions and relationships which help pattern his perception of events and shape his consciousness. Marx considers the mode of production stemming from capitalism as the basis for exploitation. The mode of production is made up of factors of production and the social relations of production. Relations of production refers to definite relationships entered into in the course of production of material goods and services or material conditions of life. According to Marx, it is the mode of production that determines the nature of relationships in society in fact, in the super structural arrangements of the society. Marx adopted the principle of historical dialectical materialism in seeking an understanding to the society. Karl Marx directed his intellectual powers against capitalism. Capitalism is a system of production and trade based on property and wealth being owned privately. A society where capitalism exists is a class society since capitalism is based on exploitation. Consequently, Karl Marx identified the existence of two major classes in the historical development of society; the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie owns the means of production and as such employs the proletariat for a wage. The proletariat has no other asset but his labour power which he sells for a wage. Marx argued that the bourgeoisie extorts the proletariat of the proceeds of his labour. The labour surplus generated from the productive interactions between the two classes is often expropriated by the bourgeoisie class. This creates a situation of mutual antagonism between the two classes. The resultant fallout from the situation painted above is the development of a class consciousness by the proletariat class who would mobilize themselves and overthrow the

bourgeoisie class and the reinstatement of a new social order known as socialism.

Using the concept of base and superstructure, Marx argued that the economic base of any society determine its superstructure (the government and its institutions). He explains that since the bourgeoisie owns the economic base, they manipulate the superstructure to suit their various purposes. Marx denounced religion as an illusion and advocated for the elimination of religion from society. He looks at religion as an opium of the people. Religion hinders the proper growth of creative powers which are capable of scientific exploration, discovery, invention, administration and organization of society. Religion encourages the masses to resign from Reproductive activities and accept poverty as a condition for religious faith. Marx explained that religion supports capitalism in making the poor more desperate and frustrated. Religion endorsed the capitalist system of production and distribution of goods and services. It supports the conditions whereby skilled and unskilled workers are exploited in kind, time, wages and the provision of social services such as electricity, water supply and medical services. In spite of all these inhuman treatment melted out to the people, religion demands that adherents submit themselves to exploitative authorities. Marx explained that religion was capable of making the problems of life more bearable than they actually are. Marx accused religion of making its adherents docile, stupid and unable to claim their rights to a decent life involving the security life and property.

Criticisms

Criticism of Marxism or Marxian analysis arise from the fact that he predicted a revolution that failed to occur in capitalist Europe. It rather took place in China and Russia, which had never attained the capitalist stage in their historical development before the revolution. Also the middle class which Marx foresaw and predicted will disappear has emerged as the dominant class in most capitalist societies today.

Ralf Dahrendorf criticized Marx of thinking that class conflicts will always mechanically lead to a revolution. There can be institutionalization of conflicts. Accordingly, he argued that authority structure rather than class structure is very important in modern societies in preventing conflicts from escalating into a revolution. Moreover, according to Mayo, Marxist theory of class and class struggle does not explain change from Feudalism to capitalism by revolution. And that if class struggle dominant the feudal period it was certainly not between the landlords an serfs. Marx has also been criticized for inadequate conceptualization of the mode of

production in his analysis of class when he referred to it as resources, techniques, and labour. He ignored the entrepreneurial functions and seems to include capital among materials. Dahrendorf (1959) also observed that Marxian analysis of class and class struggles and historical evolution of society was accurate for the 19th Century Europe, but now obsolete for the post capitalist epoch. Furthermore, the theory of dialectics recognizes conflicts as well as consensus as the basis for social change i.e Anti- thesis constituting conflict, and synthesis reconciliation being the consensus.

Marxian analysis of society, based on conflicts amongst groups, classes etc. is significant for bringing to our understanding the nature of inequality and conflicts in society as well as classes and class struggles. Furthermore, his work illuminated the development of society from one stage to the other I.e primitive communism, to slavery, feudalism to capitalism and eventually socialism and communism. Dahrendorf praises Marx for systematically exploring this phenomenon of social conflicts by stating that as obvious as it may seem that social conflicts often result in the modifications of acceptable patterns of behaviours. It has neither been explored as systematically by anybody as by Marx. Indeed, this eloquent testimony by Dahrendorf leaves us without any as regards the significance of Marxian as an approach in sociological analysis and understanding the nature of human society.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

Outline and discuss the main contentions of Karl Marx on religion and society.

3.3 Symbolic Interactionist theory

The theory of symbolic interactionism is traced to the works of Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead. Herbert Mead's central concern was the understanding of the relationship between human minded activities and nature. He posed the question that, can those techniques of natural sciences be usefully applied to the study of human mind, to human social activities. Mead tried to demonstrate that the methods of the natural sciences can be usefully applied in the study of human minded interactions and activities. According to him, human mind can be studied scientifically like any phenomena, using all the scientific methods. The methods of natural sciences include experimentation causal relationships, observations and interpretations. It also involves applying the procedures and processes used in physics, chemistry, biology, etc as well as the relationships amongst variable. Herbert Blumer provided a more elaborate

analysis on symbolic interactionism through his criticisms of variable analysis. Variable analysis deals with the explanations of relationships amongst variables especially between two or more variables i.e frustration causes aggression. Here we are having two variables i.e frustration and aggression. We can demonstrate scientifically the independent and dependent variables. But Blumer argues that the transfer of this procedure without modification in the study of human mind (the principle of symbolic interaction) is unacceptable.

Blumer suggests that “in order to act, the individual has to identify what he wants, establish an objective, or goal, map out a prospective line of behavior, note and interpret the actions of others, size up his situation, check himself at this point or that point, and frequently, spur himself on in the face of dragging dispositions or discouraging setting.

In any case, symbolic interactionism according to Herbert Mead, has the following:

- (a) That human beings are minded individuals who are perpetually involved in active interactions with one another. These interactions can change behavior etc. It is therefore, based on the following concepts

- (i) **Language:**

Language can take the form of utterances i.e gestures, gesticulations, and movement, in the process of communication with others, and perhaps self or the individual. Gestures arising from interaction process can communicate silent gestural language. It can also involve vocal utterances. The vocal language may be sacred or profane, formal or informal, vulgar or polite.

- (ii) **Interactional setting or arena**

This includes all forms of interaction that take place within an arena or captive audience. Settings are immovable and refer to physical settings but an arena can be created out of social situations or circumstance. It is the individuals that produce arena, be it physical or social.

- (iii) Self can be regarded as the thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and actions, as well as utterances any person has within himself as a distinct object. It is a social process that arises from covert, and silent conversations and behavioural dispositions, observed through one's communicative acts and conversation involving gestures.

- (iv) Joint-Act or activity refers to the situation whereby communication takes place between two or more persons. Joint-Act may take many forms depending upon people involved in the interaction process.
- (v) Interaction occasion which includes all behaviours that demonstrate those involved in the interaction process, their symbolic presence to each other or those interactions which are in one another's physical if not symbolic presence.
- (vi) **Encounter:**

It takes place during interaction occasions. Occasions are the stage for encounters which may be defined as an act between two or more person whereby those activity involved in the interaction symbols visual, auditory, and tactile contact. Encounter lasts as long as two or more persons can sustain mutual understanding and relationship. Mead goes on the demonstrate that human beings make gestures, to each other which are expected to elicit particular responses, and this is through taking the role of the other in the process of interaction. According to him

“The child, for example, gradually acquires the capacity to respond in a kind of imaginative way to his own projected conduct. Within himself he rehearses precisely what he is going to do, and inwardly he responds to himself. Should the response that he obtains prove to be unsatisfactory, he will then try again until an act is pictured in his mind which elicits within himself, the reflection of the satisfactory response.

An individual therefore directs behavior towards himself or herself, converses with himself or herself and goes ahead to pass judgment upon himself or herself. The self concept, which is non-existence at birth is now gained through social experience i.e by taking on the role of the others. Furthermore, Mead contended that:

“Thinking is thus preparatory to social action. It is interesting to note that Mead considers that sperman “x” factor in intelligence is simply this ability of the individual to take the attitudes of the other, or the attitudes of others generally, thus realizing the significance of the gestures and symbols in terms of which thinking proceeds and so being enabled to carry on with himself the internal conversation by means of gestures and symbols.

The community or organized social group that provides the individual unity of self is classified by Herbert Mead as, first the generalized social other, which reflects the attitudes of the whole

community. As a member of the community or organization, or the society, the individual anticipates the behavior of others and performs a variety of roles simultaneously. These roles, according to Mead, specify rules and techniques which the individual identifies or conforms with, and thus, observes the generalized pattern of behavior, i.e the role of the generalized others. In a highly stable society, the generalized image is fairly settled and varieties of interpretations do not exist because the roles are appreciated and well understood. Whereas, in heterogeneous, fast changing and disorganized societies, there exist series of generalized others, due to existence of many competing and difficult roles. However, it is due to the generalized other that the individual identifies with the society's aspirations, problems and goals and learns to solve them.

Cooley (1902) argued that symbols are important in the process of interaction which determines and affects the socialization of the individual. Cooley explains that the self develop out of a complex series of interaction process. Employing the concept of looking glass self, Cooley explains that we learn who we are by interacting with others. Our view of ourselves comes not only from direct contemplation of our personal qualities but also from our impression of how others perceive us. He used the phrase "looking glass self" to emphasize that the self is the product of our social interactions with other people.

Mead (1934) explains that the self developed out of a complex series of interaction. One important aspect in the development of the self is the process of role taking. Role taking is the process of mentally assuming the perspective of another, thereby enabling one to respond from imagined view point. Mead used the term "generalized others" to refer to those attitudes, viewpoints, and expectations of society as a whole; He also use the term 'significant others' to refer to those persons who are important in the development of the self of the individual.

Symbolic interactionists insist that religion consist of a body of symbols used by the society to obtain meaning to the unexplained things of life. Symbols used in religion include objects such as stones, rivers, mountains and even animals such as oxen, Tigers etc. These animals and objects are considered sacred and venerated in worship by adherents. God is considered to be a spiritual being and unapproachable by human beings who are considered sinful. Also rituals involved in religious worship are perceived as outward symbols of an innermost righteous life of worshippers. The individual person has to mould his self in line with the percepts of God as indicated by his religious group

Self Assessment Exercise 3

Discuss the social interactionist theory of religion

4.0 Conclusion

Theories provide the necessary framework for explanation of social phenomenon in the society. In sociology of religion, various theoretical frameworks exist for the explanation of religion as a social fact. Structural functionalism, Marxist and symbolic interactionism, provide such basis for explanation of religion. The choice of any particular theory is however based on the orientation of the user as well as the prevailing socio-economic realities on the ground.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, we examined the various theoretical frameworks that exist for the explanation of religion in the society. Theories covered here include, structural functionalism, Marxist theory and symbolic interactionist theory of religion.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Justify the view by Karl Marx that religion is opium for the exploitation of the people.

7.0 References/Further Readings

Durkheim, E (1961). The Elementary Forms of Religious life. New York: collier Books Ltd;

Karl, M (1930). Communist Manifesto. Hardondsworth: Penguin Books

Mead, G (1934). Mind, self and society. Chicago: Chicago Press.

COURSE:	Sociology of Religion
MODULE 2:	Issues in Sociology of Religion
UNIT 1:	The Relationship between Religion and society
UNIT 2:	Major Institutions of Society as Agencies of Religion.
UNIT 3:	Religion and Culture
UNIT 4:	Religion and Social Change
UNIT 5:	Belief Systems in African Religion

UNIT 1: The Relationship between Religion and society

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1.0 Introduction

The religious institution has been found to be an institution that has exerted profound influence on the society. Religion has been found to be a viable tool in the order and stability of many societies. In this unit therefore, we shall examine the relationship between religion and society. We shall attempt to look at the influence religion has on the society generally and how this has shaped the direction of events in the society.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to;

- (i) Describe the relationship between religion and society.
- (ii) Identify the influence religion has exerted on societies

3.0 Main Content.

3.1 The relationship between Religion and Society.

Religion is the worshiping of society (Durkheim: 1961). The society makes religious rules for its peace, order, harmony and stability. Religious beliefs and practices therefore do not exist in a vacuum. They exist in the society and are practiced by individuals who live in the communities that form the society. Religious values are themselves a reflection of values of the society where a particular religion is practiced. The mode of religious practices and worship reflects the nature of the society where such religions exist. In traditional African societies the practice of Ancestral worship, beliefs in magic, witchcraft, divination, secret societies and indigenous medicine are widespread. These various practices and beliefs are aimed at creating unity and solidarity among the people. For example, the practice of Ancestral worship among African societies has its roots in the belief that there exist a link between One's dead ancestors and the living members of the community. The dead is believed to know and reward or punish its descendants. Ancestors are therefore in constant watch over the behavior of the living. At death anybody may be called by the body of ancestors to render account of his or her relationships with the kinsmen left behind on Earth. This belief which is widespread among African societies help maintains morality, discipline and order.

Society receives rewards or punishments from supernatural beings based on their observance and adherence to laws handed down by such supernatural beings. The development and transformation of societies is also tied to the level of adherence to its religious practices. Consequently,

evil communities are visited with diseases, draughts and floods. Evil societies are dominated by witches and witchzards. Witches are believed to poses supernatural elements and powers by which they do harm to their fellow human beings. They are also believed to meet and operate chiefly at night and in secrect places. Religion therefore ensures that members of society maintain a high level of morality so as to avoid punishment from their God.

Members of the society also depend on religion for their well being. The gift of rains, bounty harvest and good health depends on the extent to which members of a society obey God. Among societies of Africa it is believed that drastic droughts, pestilence, turmoil and other forms of misfortune and sicknesses befall a community because of their evil deeds and disobedience to the will of God.

Self Assessment Exercise 1:

Explain the relationship between religion and society.

4.0 Conclusion

The relationship between religion and society existed from times immemorial. Members of a community practice religion so as to find answers to questions relating to life after death, meaning of life and relationship between God and man. Religion is therefore an inevitable part of society. It is an integral part of all societies of the world. Societies depend on religion to provide meaning to life, provide answers to questions of life after death as well as emotional, and psychological support.

5.0 Summary

This unit dealt with the relationship between religion and society. Religion as an integral part of societies is found to have predominant influence on the people. Religion constitute of set of norms, and dogmas that relate the individual with the supernatural being. Religion is therefore meant to ensure the continued peace and order in society so as to enhance man's capabilities and well being.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

Discuss the relationship that exist between religion and the society

7.0 References/ Further Reading

Durkheim, E (1961). The Elementary forms of Religious life. New York: collier Books Ltd

Mbiti, J.S (1975). An Introduction to African Religion. London: Heinemann books Ltd.

COURSE: Sociology of Religion

MODULE 2: Issues in sociology of Religion

UNIT 2: Major Institutions of society as agencies of Religion

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1.0 Introduction

Social institutions refer to an enduring complex of norms, roles, values and sanctions which embrace a distinct segment of social life. A social institution is an organized system of social relationship which embodies certain common values and procedures that are geared towards meeting the needs of the society. In this unit we will be looking at some major institutions of the society as agencies of religion. The institutions to be covered here include the family and the school.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to;

- (i) Explain the family as an agency of religion in the society
- (ii) Describe the educational institution as an agency.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The family as an agency of religion.

The family is a domestic group in which parents and children live together and in its elementary form consists of a couple with their children (Mair, 1972). It is a kinship grouping which provides for the rearing of children and for certain other human needs (Horton and Hunt: 1976). Although different definitions emphasize different things, what is clear about the family as a sociological concept is that it involves sex, children, parenthood, kinship and sometimes marriage and common residency. The presence of some of these elements in any given concrete case may depend on the type of family one is talking about. The family as an agency of religion comes in handy in form of socialization duties placed on it by the society. The family as a basic unit of the society is charged with the responsibility of child rearing and upbringing. Every individual in the society comes from a family. The family is expected to socialize its members in such a manner as to place God first in all their daily activities of life. Every family embodies a set of common values (Values about love, children, life, family routines and religion), and a network of roles and social statuses that determine relationship within the family.

TYPES OF FAMILY

(a) Nuclear Family

The nuclear family consists of a man, his wife and children. Another term for the nuclear family is elementary family. It has also been referred to as the natural family. It is also found in other parts of the world where in many cases it co-exists with other types of family. The nuclear family can be further classified into a number of types. These are the conjugal family otherwise known as the family of procreation, the natal family also called the family of orientation. The conjugal family is the family in which one is a father/husband or mother/ wife. Natal family is the family where one was born.

(b) Extended Family

An extended family consists of several nuclear families i.e two or more nuclear families. A man's conjugal family is joined through him to his father's conjugal family and through his father to his grand-father's conjugal family, in that progression (upward and downward) to form the extended family. The extended family thus covers one's nuclear family plus any other kin with whom one is related through blood. The extended family is common on the African continent where it exists along-side the nuclear family. In England and other western societies the extended family was said to have existed prior to the industrial revolution whose pervasive influence eroded the extended.

An opposite view however contends that in these western societies the extended family structures still persist even onto this day. They are seen to serve as a form of social insurance against the accidents and misfortunes at the industrial workplace. The second view is probably based on studies that measured the "currency of contacts" and "family sentiments" among western urban dwellers and their near and distant relatives, rather than on findings that proved geographical and common co-habitation of blood kins. Many conflicting views of this kin often stem from problems of level in concept operationalization.

(c) Monogamous and Polygynous Families

These terms are used to describe families in terms of the kind of marriage contract that gave rise to them. A monogamous family is a family composed of a man and one wife and their children. It is equivalent to a nuclear family and has been referred to as the simple legal family. A

polygynous family on the other hand is a family composed of one man and more than one wife and their children. In a polygynous family each wife/mother and her children constitute what is called a mother-centered family known as matricentric or matrifocal family. All the matricentric families within a polygynous family share in one father/husband.

In the typical African setting, each matricentric family which in its own right is a nuclear family is sheltered in a different apartment and maintains a separate kitchen from the rest of the other matricentric units. In the traditional African setting the father/husband is fed in turn by the matricentric units. It is also important to emphasise that each matricentric family relates as a unit or as individuals with the other members of the polygynous family. The polygynous family has been referred to by another term: “complex legal family” which is linked by their relationship to a common father. One can also speak of a polygynous family.

(d) Ghost Family

A ghost family consists of the ghost (the pater), his wife, their children, and the kinsman who became their genitor by reason of his customary duty towards a dead relative (the ghost). A ghost family is then a family that is set up through ghost-inheritance marriage.

Functions of the Family

The family as a social institution performs a number of significant functions for society and these functions justify its existence. The functions include: the regulation of sexual behaviour, the replacement of dead members, the socialization of new members, provision of economic support or care, assignment of social status or social placement, provision of emotional support and the provision of physical protection.

1. The Sexual Regulation Function

The family is the major institution through which the society organizes and regulates the satisfaction of sexual desires of its members. No society allows its members to engage in random sexual behaviour. There are always rules which specify who may sex and who may not, whom one may have sexual access to and whom one may not mate with etc. Although many societies provide some alternative sexual outlets or tolerate some degrees of sexual indulgence for whatever social purpose (e.g as a preparation for marriage or a means of determining fertility), the marriage and family system remain the principal setting within which most sexual intercourse must occur. Hence most, if not all societies, have norms which prohibit sex outside marriage and the family.

2. The Reproduction Function

All societies need to replace its members as many grow old and die off. Without such a replacement a society will soon disappear or vanish. The family provides it with the means of reproducing its number and ensuring generational replacement. In no society can one most procreation encourage outside the family setting even in the most promiscuous and permissive of all societies. It is within the family up that adequate role positions have been prepared for the caring of the children that are born.

3. The Socialization Function

The family in all societies serves as primary agency for child socialization. Newly born children need to be taught the customary ways of their society. In the helpless years of their infancy, they need to be cared for and provided for. Without being taught the rudiments of their societies they cannot grow up into functional adults. All of this task even though there are other socialization agencies which can play contributory roles.

The reason is simple. Because the newly-born child belongs to the parents, the latter take special care and interest in monitoring its development and progress. Because parent have personal stake in the growing child they conscientiously pass onto the child everything it requires to mature into a full adult member of society language, values, norms, beliefs, food, protection etc. The family is thus the most significant and influential agency of socialization.

4. Provision of Economic Support

Human beings need food, shelter, clothing in order to survive. These basic needs of life are provided by the family. Within the family set-up those who are unable to take care of themselves by reasons of illness, unemployment, youth or old age find ready assistance from other siblings or family members who are productive and active and who earn income. Parents also recognize a social duty to fend for their children or family members. In small-scale societies the family is the basic economic unit. This means that members work together as a household team and share commonly in the proceeds of their labour. Which means that the family plays a great economic role by ensuring economic sustenance for its members or by making it possible for its members to obtain material support which cannot be readily obtained outside the family context.

5. The Status Placement Function

A person's family of birth determines his initial status in society. When we are born, we enter into the statuses of our parents: we belong to the same religious and social class of our parents. It is from our parent's classification that we must start out in life and then possibly change it over the course of time for better or for worse. Thus, not only material goods and wealth are inherited from the family but also a variety of ascribed and achieved statuses.

In any society that is stratified according to class, the status of a child's family greatly determines the opportunities and rewards available to that child, and this head-start substantially determines his entire life chances including his adult status. All things being equal, a child attains or maintains the class status of his parents at adult age. This is because the family of orientation prepares the child for class position identical to its own. As the child grows he internalizes from its family a set of cultural norms, values, interests, beliefs and life-habits which enable him to continue in or re-enact his family class status.

Strangely enough, this process of imbibing our family's social class outlook imposes on us a class ceiling or blockade which makes it difficult or impossible for us to achieve status levels above those of our parents. Quite clearly, our family background is the most significant single determinant of our status in society.

6. Emotional Support

Every human being needs a warm, affectionate relationship with a close circle of intimate associates. Lack of love and intimate responses from others lead individuals to the brink of emotional instability and possible neuroses. In the harsh industrial environment of today's modern society which is characterized by disappointments, dissatisfactions and failures, there is a great need for a safe-haven, a place of emotional refuge into which a victim can run for comfort. The family provides one such place.

The family is a primary group that is composed of blood relatives. In this primary setting emotional needs can be fulfilled and very deep personal feelings can be expressed with no reservations whatsoever. The family provides us with the companionship and intimate human responses which we need to remain emotionally stable and to lead happy lives. This is a very important function.

7. The Protection Function.

In every society the family undertakes the task of protecting its members. It offers them physical protection in addition to economic and emotional or psychological protection. In many societies family members so much identify with one another such that anything that affects any one member of the family affects the entire family. An attack against a member is taken as one against the whole family. There is a mutual responsibility among members to protect one another.

In primitive societies, there was a practice known as group revenge. Revenge of an injury inflicted by an external aggressor was organized at the level of the group. The individual was not left along to revenge a wrong done to him personally. Revenge was recognized as the responsibility of the group in which a person belonged. This could be a family or clan etc. Physical protection even in modern society is a role which most families will be quite ready to play in the lives of their members.

The family as the first point of contact with the child in the socialization process plays a vital role in serving as an agency of religion. Because the newly born child belongs to the parents, the latter takes special care and interest in monitoring his development and progress. Because parents have stake in the growing child they conscientiously pass onto the child everything he requires to mature into a full adult member of society. Religious values form an important component of what the family teaches her young ones. In most families, priority is placed on adherence to a routine of activities including reading the bible every morning and night. Family members gather at night to say prayers before going to bed and early morning before commencement of the day's activities. The family there serves as an important agency of religion.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

How does the family help in teaching religious beliefs to children?

3.2 The Educational Institution As Agency Of Religion

Educational institution comprises that segment of the basic structure of society which meets the educational needs of the people. These educational needs of the society include transmission of social heritage, new ideas, skills and values including religious values. Education therefore involves the transmission of knowledge, skill and values which

the individual need to master in order to control his physical and social environment and adapt himself to the demands of the society of which he is a member (Eddiefloyd: 2003). Education has several types. These include, formal, Non-formal and informal education. Formal education is that education which takes places in the classroom. It is school based education and involves all experiences that are provided by Professional teachers and experts. Formal education is organized body of knowledge that is structured in curriculum. It is learning in which individuals undertake consciously under formal schools with rules, regulations and organized curriculum and methods of teaching.

Informal education is that type of education which takes place with or without its receiver being conscious of its effects on him. Informal education takes places everyday and at all times. There is no formal setting for it but as individuals discuss, observe events and imitate others, learning takes places. Informal education is not planned and organized and as such has no consciously planned curriculum.

Non-formal education comprises those highly specific educational experiences which are provided in non-school environments. This type of education is organized to some extent but do not represent full developed curriculum. Examples of non-formal education include trade apprenticeship schemes, Agricultural extension program, National youth service schemes etc.

Educational institution serves as agencies of religion in a number of ways. In the first instance, the curriculum of schools involves teaching of religion as a subject. The pupils are taught religious beliefs and practices as a way of life which they come to grow up and mature with. Education also involves imparting on of religious values into learners. Thus learners imbibe values of honesty, humility, dedication and loyalty molded on sound morality which ensures the projection of society interest as paramount.

Education ensures the integration of various diversified religious sects and denomination into one body of believers. Most modern societies contain with them diverse religious groups whose cultures and religious practices are not only discordant but may be in actual conflict with one another. In such a situation education comes in handy as a means of integrating the different sub-cultural groups into a common culture of shared beliefs and values.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

How does the educational institution aid in the spreading or religious beliefs and values among learners?

4.0 Conclusion

Religious beliefs and practices get transmitted from generation to generation through social institutions that serve as agencies of religion. Such institutions include the family and educational institutions. The family is the first point of contact between the child and the outer world. The family therefore serves as an important agency of religion. Because it is saddled with the primary socialization of its members, the family transmits values and morality to its members for their effective integration into the society. Educational institution provides formal, Non-formal and informal types of education to religious adherents. The institution transmits values and morality to learners. The curriculum of schools is designed in such a manner as to impart religious instructions to learners.

5.0 Summary

In this unit two major institutions of the society have been examined as agencies of religion in the society. The institutions include the family and educational institution. The family provides the child with early religious experiences that help him mould his life along successful path. Educational institution provides a detailed curriculum of activities for teaching religion as a subject in schools. This provides the learner with opportunity of meeting God. The emphasis on moral character ensures that learners/students learn the sound moral values of religion and the society.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Discuss the place of the family as an agency of Religion.
2. list and explain the functions of the family

7.0 References/Further Reaching

Horton, P.B. and Hunt, G. (1976) Sociology. New York: McGraw-Hill Company

Mair, L. (1972) Introduction to Social Anthropology. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

COURSE: Sociology of Religion

MODULE 2: Issues in Sociology of Religion

UNIT 3: Religion and Culture

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1.0 Introduction

Religion and culture are often perceived as two sides of the same coin. Religion stems from the culture of a people and their desire to provide answers to culturally defined problems of life. The Religion of a people portrays an aspect of their culture. As an aspect of culture, religion provides psychological and emotional remedy to the problems of man in the society. In this unit therefore we shall examine religion and culture. We shall look at culture and its various components and proceed to examine the relationship between religion and culture of society.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to;

- (i) Explain the concept of culture and its aspects
- (ii) Explain the relationship between religion and culture

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Concept of Culture

The concept of culture has several definitions. To many, culture represents the totality of way of life of a people. More clearly, culture is defined as the complex whole of man's acquisitions of knowledge, morals, beliefs, art, custom, technology etc which are shared and transmitted from generation to generation (Otite and Ogoinwo: 1979). Culture is therefore everything that is socially learned and shared by members of a society. The concept of culture is used in reference to a group or society. The architectural designs and responses to environmental cues which we collectively refer to as culture are not God given but are deliberately fashioned out by members of a society to guide life and living in all aspects of society. This implies that different societies have different cultural patterns.

Culture develops out of the desire by a group to overcome their problems as they try to control their environment so as to improve their economic, religious, security and technological needs. As a group work towards providing its needs, it becomes necessary to devise rules and norms of behavior, create values and principles that will govern social interaction and relationship. Culture is therefore a distinctive and transmissible network of symbols which characterize a designated aggregate of people (Eddiefloyd: 2003). Culture embraces such things that

are man-made, artifacts (Chairs, Cars, planes etc), ideals, beliefs and feelings (e.g. about the existence of God). Culture thus covers all aspects of life religion inclusive.

In scientific usage, culture is often defined in blanket terms as the total of life of a people. More specifically, culture is defined as the complex whole of man's acquisitions of knowledge, morals, belief, art, custom, technology etc which are shared and transmitted from generation to generation. Many anthropologist and sociologist accept this definition of culture which was given by E.B.Tylor in his primitive culture first published in 1891. The definition stresses that culture is not a personal item. Culture is used with reference to a society or a group of societies. Culture does not die with the death of an individual or a group of such people vanish under such mishaps as earthquakes. Even here there is the possibility that the materials and the technology of such a people may be dug up at some future date by archeologist and the buried culture of the society reconstructed.

Culture has both material and non-material aspects. Material culture relates to overt or explicit aspect of culture. It is a reference to the visible or concrete acquisition of man in society. Examples of material culture include bridges, hoes, houses, cooking utensils, handicrafts etc. on-material aspect of culture consist of knowledge, moral, philosophy, language, attitudes, values, norms, religion etc of a people shared and transmitted in a society. Non-material aspects of culture are not visible or tangible but are manifested through thinking and behavior of a people. Both of these aspects of culture – material and non-material go together as the culture of a people. They are however important in the analysis of cultural patterns of a people, that is their general mode of conduct the systematic and integrated content of behaviour which is characteristic of that society. Because of this, it is possible to predict or anticipate the behaviour of members of a given culture.

In Sociological studies we do not consider any society and individual as uncultured. Every person who is a member of a society has a culture. Ideally, no one culture is better than another. The concept of cultural relativity is an important one in sociological studies. By this concept, every cultural trait or behaviour is judged in the context of the particular culture and its value system. The concept implies that both the diversities of cultures and their comparative appraisals. Whereas there are universal traits in culture, there are also traits which are found only in certain cultures. Hence there are specific elements which characterize a culture and general elements which cut across cultures. However, because culture is an abstraction, it is impossible to say even in scientific terms that one

culture is richer than the other. The richness and comparability of such cultural elements as language, morality, systems of ideas, philosophy etc are obviously impossible to measure.

Cultural accumulation is the process by which new traits or elements are added to a particular culture. Hence there is cultural growth. This increase in the number of items or traits in a culture is possible through inventions or discoveries by members of the society or through diffusion. These processes of cultural accumulation and of cultural evolution are fraught with change. Culture is not static. It has continuous growth and is therefore always changing through the acquisition of more cultural traits and borrowing. The introduction of a cultural element may mean the introduction of an initial conflict. But such conflict usually disappears as the cultural trait becomes accepted. However, it is not in every case that new cultural traits are accepted. A new cultural element can be rejected by a society and also there can be continuities and discontinuities in the culture of a people. There may be continuities in the central traits of a culture whereas only the peripheral ones may be discontinued. Cultural change, sometimes referred to as cultural dynamics occurs when the culture of a people is modified through time. A people's culture can be shown in their behaviour and manifested in their artefacts and art forms. Culture therefore cannot be observed directly. What we can observe is the behaviour of people and their techniques and manner of constructing material artefacts. Similarly, dancing is not culture itself; it is one form through which culture manifests itself. Human behaviour, speeches, dances, songs etc are important in a study of culture only because of the light they shed into the way people are trained and brought up to be members of a society. What we refer to earlier as material and non-material aspects of culture including carvings, paintings, dress, philosophy, etc represent the end product of culture of a people.

Every culture is distinct, with its own history and dynamics. Because of this it can only be evaluated in its own terms hence the term cultural relativity. In its dynamic yet distinct form, culture functions as a mechanism of adaptation to a particular environment be it social or physical. It is because of this adaptation that a people and their culture can survive in a particular environment.

Changes in culture are thus caused by several factors: ecological changes and the need to survive, inventions to exploit the environment efficiently, culture contact leading to the availability of alternatives, elements, innovations, process of cultural transmission from generation to generation and the dynamic process involved in the interaction between society and its culture.

Self Assessment Exercise

Define the concept of culture and explain its various aspects.

3.2 Religion and Culture in Society

Religion constitute a major aspect of culture; the non-material culture. Every religious practice, value or norm is based on the cultural background of a people. Again, every religious ceremony practiced among the people of a community is traceable to earlier cultural practices. Among the Roman Catholics, many of their religious rituals and ceremonies have a link to the Roman Culture. The celebration of feasts and festivals such as Christmas has their roots in Roman Culture. Religion is culturally determined and as such it expresses the very nature of belief prevalent in a people. In Africa, the advent of missionary activities portray Western religion as superior to any other form of religion. The politicized belief that one religion is superior to another made early Christian Missionaries to Africa come into contact with stiff opposition from the natives. This resulted in the destruction by fire and disappearance through other means of what was derogatorily labeled idols in several West and East African societies. The inability of the missionaries to understand the culture of the people as was exemplified by their religious practices and values often brought them into open conflict. For example, the agrarian nature of African communities require that men marry a number of wives so as to own a large number of workers. Again ancestral link between the living and the dead requires that Africans indulge in ancestral worship through pouring of libations and offering of sacrifices using animals. Virtually, the Christian church forbade Africans from marrying many wives, ancestral worship and the use of blood of animals in sacrifices and pouring of libations. Hence there is often conflict between different cultures and moral standards. Religion is measured in terms of Western Christian ethical standards and requirements. This phenomenon many scholars have argued facilitated the gradual erosion of and destruction of African cultural values.

One of African's reaction to the perceived encroachment on their culture was the formation of independent indigenous churches and religious movements (Otite and Ogwoinwo: 1979). Example of such churches include the cherubium and seraphim and the Christ Apostolic Church.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

Discuss how religion is influenced by culture of a people.

4.0 Conclusion

Culture as the totality of way of life of people is related to religion in several ways. Religious beliefs and practices stems from the culture of a people. As an aspect of culture, religion reflects the morals, values, norms and standards adopted by society for its members. The advent of western religion tend to destroy the culture of indigenous Africa. Western religion perceive African values and norms as barbaric and as such need to be abolished.

5.0 Summary

Culture is the complex whole of man's acquisition of knowledge, morals, beliefs, art, custom, technology etc learned and transmitted from generation to generation. Culture has material and non-material aspects. Religion and culture are related as religion constitutes an aspect of culture, the non-material. Religious values, norms and practices of a society are derived from the general culture of the people. Ironically, religion and culture have not been the best of friends in Africa. The advent of missionary activities in Africa has witnessed the gradual erosion of traditional African values and percepts.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

Discuss the relationship between culture and religion in Nigeria today

References/Further Reading.

Otite, O and Ogwoinwo, W. (1979) An Introduction to sociological studies. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.

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COURSE: Sociology of Religion

Module 2: Issues in sociology of Religion

Unit 4 Religion and social change in society

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1.0 Introduction

In the last unit, you learnt about religion and culture. In this unit, we will focus our attention on Religion and social change. We will first of all look at the concept of social change generally. This will place us in a better position of understanding how religion can bring about change in the society. We will look at protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism.

2.0 Objectives

By the time you finished studying this unit, you should be able to;

- (i) Understand the concept of social change
- (ii) Explain how religion can bring about change in the society for development.
- (iii) Discuss the protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The concept of social change

Social change refers to the significant alterations of culture, social structure and social behavior over time. It is a reference to the modifications that occur within social institutions, in social attitudes, values, beliefs, and patterns of relationship. When change occurs in a society, patterns of cultural behavior are altered; new institutions emerge to take care of the needs of the emerging structures and social relationship. Examples of social change include changes in language, use of new forms of transportation, changing ideas about sex and equality, new dance, dress and even marriage. Social structures everywhere undergo continuous change. The myriad of observable differences in social phenomena over time call attention to the universal and continuous nature of social change. In sociology everything changes, nothing is constant except change itself. Otite and Ogionwo (1978) has used the example of the changing economic and social roles of women in Nigeria within the past four decades to illustrate the concept of change. They explain that the traditional image of woman has been that of a wife and mother and her duty was to serve the man. The working woman was associated with promiscuity and indecent behavior. Nowadays, the traditional role of the Nigerian woman is changing. This change is due largely as a result of modernization. Women are no longer restricted to the kitchen and domestic duties. Women are now becoming more involved in economic,

political and cultural events. With improved communication and transportation system rural women are getting more involved in trade and commerce. Women are increasingly been involved in education and politics. Also, women are increasingly been involved in religious activities with some of them starting up their independent ministries.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

Define social change.

3.2 Sources of Social Change

Sociologists have over the years identified several factors responsible for social change in the society. The direction which change takes as a result of any causative factor depends on the peculiar social and historical conditions that prevail in a particular society. Some of the sources of social change include;

(a) Invention: - This is a reference to new use of existing knowledge to produce something that was not in existence. Two types of inventions exist; material inventions and social inventions. Material inventions involve producing tangible products such as cameras, automobiles and computers. Social inventions involve creating democratic institutions, slavery, and corporations. Invention is not strictly an individual matter but a social process which involves continuous series of improvement and modification towards improving the existing condition.

(b) Discovery: - This is another source of social change in society. A discovery is a new perception of an aspect of reality that already exists. When a discovery is put to use then it becomes a source of social change. Discoveries themselves are useless until they are put to use and can produce change. For example, the ancient Greeks were reputed to have discovered the principle of steam power and actually built a toy steam engine in Alexandria about 100 AD. They did not put this principle to any serious use and as such could not generate any significant change until the era of industrial revolution in Europe.

(c) Increases in population: - Increases in population of an area may lead to decline in informal relations, the growth of secondary group relations and the growth of formal institutional structures. Population increases also mean increase pressure and demand on available resources. Thus, there is increased demand on available infrastructure such as housing, roads, electricity and pipe borne water. There may also be increases in poverty, diseases and crime as a result of population increases. These developments generate social change in the society.

(d) Conflict: - This has remained a major source of change over the years. Conflicts when they occur may degenerate into open hostilities and even war. Conflicts that degenerate into war have caused untold hardship on the people leading to outbreak of diseases, destruction of infrastructure and maiming or outright killing of people. This development is noted to have brought social changes in many parts of the world. For example, the people of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine etc are known to have developed a high resistance spirit due to frequent wars.

(e) Human Action: - Human action has been noted to be a major source of change. Human action can be individualistic or collective. Throughout history, notable personalities and figures have been found to take decisions and actions that have led to great social change. Adolf Hitler of Germany, Julius Caesar of the Roman Empire amongst others have been known to have taken actions or decisions that have turned around the fortunes of their country. Another dimension of human action is the collective. Collective action takes the form of social movements and revolts. Organizations such as pro-democracy groups, civil liberties organizations, National liberation groups etc have been known to bring social change in the society through collective efforts.

Self Assessment Exercise 2:

List and explain the major sources of social change

3.3 Factors That Affect the Rate of Social Change

Social change does not occur with equal rapidity in all societies. Also some societies are more open and more receptive to change than others. Many factors are responsible for this. These include: changes in our physical environment (which result from human misuse of the environment, or from natural disaster), population changes, and the extent of isolation or contact with other groups or societies. From our treatment of some sources of social change, we can arrive at inferences on how these factors can affect the rates of social change. Some of these inferences are that: constant major change in the physical environment gives rise to greater change in the social and cultural life of a people; that a more rapidly growing population triggers off more social change, and that being located in a geographical position of contact with other cultures permits more social change to take place. Thus, societies change more or less depending on whether or not they exhibit these features.

The other factors that also affect the rate of social change are: the structure of society and its culture, attitudes and values of a society, the perceived needs of a society, and the cultural base of a society.

1. The Structure of Society and Culture.

The way a society is structured affects the rate at which social change occurs in that society. Studies have shown that a society which emphasizes conformity and loyalty to the group is less receptive to change than a society which encourages individual inquisitiveness, discretion or initiative, and which is tolerant of cultural diversity. Again, a society which ascribes knowledge, authority, and respect to its elderly members, rather than to its educated intellectuals is more averse to social change. Also, persons who are educated, who hold factory jobs, and who maintained a newspaper reading habit were found to show more receptiveness towards change (Ottendberg, 1959).

In societies whose culture is highly integrated such that one element or aspect of the culture is tightly inter-wined with the rest of the culture in mutually inseparable and interdependent way, social change is less probable. Schneider (1959) has drawn attention to the Masai, and Pakot peoples of Africa (as well as others) whose cultures are integrated or centred around the cattle. In these societies, cattle commands a very high socio-cultural value. It provides the people with a means of subsistence; it is used for the payment of bride wealth during marriage; it serves as a means of measuring one's social status (the quantity one has determines his position in the social ladder) and finally, it is an object of love and affection for its owner who loves each cattle just as he loved the human members of his family

In such a culturally integrated society where there is extreme overlap of the economy, marriage, family, stratification and religion etc social change is strongly resisted. On the contrary societies whose institutions and cultural practices are less fused together or less dependent upon one another, tend to be more amenable to social change. Most contemporary societies are experiencing much social change because of their loose and flexible social and cultural structure; and their emphatic stress on individualism and achievement orientation

(ii) Attitudes and Values of a Society

Societies differ in their attitude towards change. Likewise, some societies have values which are favourable to change while others do not. Some societies exist which cherish and revere their past. They maintain a long lasting relationship with their dead ancestors whom they recognize as spirit to be worshipped. In this kind of society, elders are respected and obeyed, and cultural traditions, rituals and customs are permanent features in the life of the community. Attachment of this kind of primordial essences makes little or no room for social change to take place. In such a

static social system there is hardly any visible notice of social change, neither is such a change considered desirable. When a people hold such attitudes and values that are antagonistic to change, there is a tendency for change to be resisted in that society.

There are however many other societies which are open to and receptive of change. Such societies are usually rapidly changing because the prevailing attitudes and values within them promote change. Such values encourage skepticism, and at the same time accommodate proposal for change in institutional structures. In general, it is certainly true of today's modern societies that within them attitudes to change are highly positive. But in any given society, it is possible to find sections of the population that are not only conservative but also defiant of social change. Such resistance to change may still be explainable in terms of the values and attitudes held by the relevant group or subgroup of the population. For example, rural farmers who refuse to adopt new farming techniques, or villagers who refuse to patronize modern medical facilities but prefer traditional methods.

(iii) **Perceived Needs of Society**

The rate and direction of social change in any society is affecting by the perceived needs of that society. Needs are subjective hence different societies have different needs. This also means that a need becomes real only when a people perceived and define it as such. Naturally, needs call for responses that will general need satisfaction. In the context of social change, a society will be apt to embrace change that will solve its needs. Where as it may show non-challance to change that is neutral, or at best not relevant to its needs.

In a very poor country, the pressing needs may be those of food, water, and housing. Members of these poor countries will obviously show more interest in change programmes that will provide them these basic requirements. They may not be quite interested in luxury or cosmetic items such as exotic cars, fancy dresses, or such dispensable commodities which more prosperous countries will crave for. Thus, social change is widely accepted and rapid when it affects the identified needs of a society. Hence we say that it is perceived needs (i.e necessity) that provide the stimulus for innovation and social change. In the language of the well-known cliché, necessity is the mother of invention.

(iv) **The Cultural Base**

Members of any society normally inherit from their ancestral predecessors a certain variety, quantity, and quality of cultural artifacts,

knowledge, and techniques which they then begin to build upon and improve for contemporary usages. Such accumulation of tools, knowledge, and techniques which are available to a society at any given time is what is called the cultural base of that society.

The first humans on earth were the pioneers and forerunners of human culture. They did not have the privilege of inheriting any social experiences from a previous generation. They invented whatever they had from the scratch. Because they lacked an existing cultural base they could not achieve much by way of inventions and discoveries. The cave man could thus hardly go beyond the bow and arrow technology or beyond counting by the fingers and toes. But as the cultural base of human society grew with succeeding generations of homo sapiens adding their own inventions, a yet Increasing number of discoveries and inventions have become possible.

Today, so much technological and cultural breakthroughs are being recorded because the present society has accumulated so much knowledge and information which it combines in new ways to produce new inventions. It is believed that unless the cultural base supplies the relevant initial inventions and discoveries, an invention cannot be completed. Today' high rate of invention and discovery is possible because there is already in existence a vast accumulation of scientific technical knowledge which is freely shared by the global world society in a cross fertilization of ideas and knowledge. From this culture base still new discoveries and technological breakthroughs are churned out at an exponential rate. The more developed therefore the culture base of a society is, the faster and more rapidly will social change occur that society.

Community Acceptance of and Resistance to Social Change

We have identified some of the factors that affect the rate of social change in society. Questions of rate are however different from questions that address the acceptability of change proposal members of society. For a given change to occur, not to talk of occurring rapidly or slowly, it has first to be accepted by society. There is abundant evidence that in many societies and at different time period, some particular change proposal were accepted, while some were resisted or rejected outright.

Certainly, not all proposals for change are accepted by the society. Rather, there is usually in operation a process of selective acceptance which makes it possible for some innovations to receive automatic or instant acceptance, others accepted only after a long period of persuasion and yet others accepted only in part, or otherwise rejected totally. Many different factors are responsible for this selective approach to acceptance

of change. These are: the specific attitudes and values of a community, the demonstrability of the proposal innovation, the compatibility of the proposal change with the existing culture, the costs of proposal change and the role change agents. We shall now consider each of these factors.

(i) Specific Attitudes and Values of the Community

Apart from the general attitude of a community towards change, every community has some specific attitudes and values which are tied to certain customary objects and practices within its culture. Within every culture, there are certain specific practices (e.g. agricultural methods and practices), or certain local foods etc. that are valued intrinsically for what they are, or for what they represent culturally to the people. A community may cling to such an age-long practice or food preference, and resist pressures towards its substitution simply because the proposed change violates long-established cultural taste, or practice, or because the new practice shocks their cultural sensibility by negating a cultural belief that lay behind a practice.

There is the example of the Biaga community of central India who would not abandon their primitive digging sticks to adopt the far more effective moldboard plow implement. Their reason for resisting the innovation is that the people loved the earth as a benevolent and generous mother and as such they could not bring themselves to cut her up with knives (i.e. with the moldboard plow). The Biaga preferred to gently help mother earth with the digging stick to bring forth her produce (Elwin, 1939). People's established likes, beliefs and tastes, play a role in their acceptance of or resistance to change.

A community may enthusiastically embrace a proposed adoption of a new agricultural seed input because of its high-yield potential. But when in course of time the community discovers that the resulting yield does not lend itself to the preparation of certain valued cultural meals, or that taste of the new yield does not tie with their preferred tastes, the community may quickly reject the hybrid species and return to the use of the old seedling. Thus, when specific attitudes and values are challenged or threatened by new innovations, such innovations tend to be resisted or rejected. But when they conform to these specific attitudes and values, such innovations are readily accepted.

(ii) It makes a difference as far as the acceptance of innovation is concerned whether the usefulness of the proposed innovation can be demonstrated. An innovation is more readily accepted when its usefulness can be practically and easily demonstrated. When the workability of an invention or a proposed change cannot easily be demonstrated, acceptance

of it becomes delayed if not unforeseeable. Many rural African would stick to herbal practitioners simply because the former produce instant conformable results. Demonstrability of innovations encourages its quick acceptance. Unfortunately, to demonstrate some inventions or innovations would require huge financial expenditures. Some mechanical inventions can be demonstrated on a small-scale basis whereas others will require large scale exhibitions that will consume enormous time to arrange.

At the other extreme are social inventions (e.g the corporation democratic government) which cannot be easily demonstrated in a laboratory. These however can be demonstrated in the open society but they require a long time to try out. In comparative terms, mechanical inventions are more easily accepted than social inventions because of the former's relative ease of demonstrability. Unlike mechanical inventions whose value or workability can be demonstrated prior to acceptance, most social inventions must first be adopted before their practical value can be assessed. This situation hinders greatly the acceptance of social inventions.

(iii) Compatibility With Existing Culture

A community readily accepts an innovation when it fits so well into the existing culture. Some innovations dove tail perfectly into existing cultural patterns, and thereby promote the attainment of culture goals, while some innovations conflict with existing patterns. Incompatibility with existing cultural forms can take several shapes. It can take the form of outright conflict with existing patterns. In this case the proposed innovation runs counter to what is on ground. An example is the introduction of merit as the sole basis for hiring and promoting labour in a society that upholds a tradition of people recognizing an obligation to take care of their family members (or those they know) over and above other outsiders irrespective of whether or not such relatives deserve such appointments or promotions, or such other relevant recognition. In many developing countries social placement based on ascription and family connection (the "I.M. factor") is gradually giving way to the principle of meritocracy and social system based on achievement.

When innovation conflicts with already existing patterns, there possible outcomes can be anticipated: (1). The innovation may be rejected (2) the innovation may be culture in order to conform to the made ways, and (3) the innovation may be accepted and its conflict with the existing culture concealed or evaded through rationalization. For instance the law of a country or state may prohibit polygyny (marrying more than one wife) and yet closes it eyes to those who violate it. Non-enforcement of

the law may be dictated by some identifiable reasons which are persuasive. Although it is not always the case, innovations that are in conflict with the existing culture tend not to be accepted by the people.

Another way in which an innovation may be incompatible with the existing culture is by calling for or requiring new patterns that are not presently existing within that culture. Some innovations that are introduced into a society have no existing corresponding patterns into which they can fit. Given this situation what a society does is generally to apply the unfamiliar innovation in ways identical to the uses it puts similar elements in its culture. When the old, familiar ways or uses fail to match the new innovation, society begins to develop new ways of making effective use of the new element that has been introduced. In this way society creates in response to the innovation, new patterns in the culture which are developed over time.

When the American Indians were given cows by the government, they first hunted them as games because of their hunting culture. But eventually they learnt and developed the practice of animal husbandry which suited the cows. Many innovations generate this kind of pressure that lead to the development of new patterns within a culture. Some innovations are therefore additive in consequences.

Thirdly, an innovation may be incompatible with the existing culture by the fact that the replace or substitute traits. In some cases, an innovation has required that some familiar aspects of an existing culture be discarded and replaced with a new culture traits or element. In many traditional societies, many cultural values and practices have had to give modern social innovations in such areas as sex equality, political administration the economy and the like. Today, a trend toward the equality of the sexes, democratic governance, and rational business enterprise etc have displaced the erstwhile traditional pattern. Innovations that result in the discard or shedding off of some familiar elements of the culture are less acceptable than those which add to existing traits.

(iv) **Costs of Change**

Social change nearly always carries with it certain general and specific costs. The general costs involved the overall disruption or disorganization which change visits on existing culture patterns by causing the discarding of or modification of certain elements of the culture, and by undermining deeply held community values and sentiments. The specific costs of change include the technical costs and difficulties associated with technical innovation. Whenever new technical inventions are made, such breakthroughs are always greeted with the fear

that the present stock of machinery and equipment are at the verge of being rendered obsolete or abandoned to waste.

This is because people's interest in them and subsequent demand for them soon takes a nose-dive or vanishes altogether. Not only therefore, does the new invention threaten and often kill the market for the now older models of machinery and equipment, it also destroys the market for technical skills which workers have invested years to acquire but which are now no longer in demand. To remain relevant in the emerging labour market such skilled industrial workers require retraining in the new techniques and designs, and this is not without some personal and social costs.

Furthermore, technical change such as the kind that takes place in the factory production line which involves the introduction of automation and machine power, and the displacement of manual labourers entails job losses. With the introduction of automation few workers are now needed to perform with machines the tasks that several dozens of workers previously undertook. Such job losses arising from technical change within the factories and industrial are certainly counted as costs to the individual workers who have become so disengaged.

As would be expected, the costs of social change not equally distributed. The industry which is rendered obsolete, the workers whose skill is rendered unmarketable and the workers who are retrenched from industries, all as a result of technical innovation bear directly the heavy costs of technical innovation. Consumers of the improved products on the other hand are to the benefiting end and shouldering no foreseeable costs. Most social changes carry a threat whether real or unreal. They also carry cost sometimes light sometimes heavy. On the whole persons with vested interests who are threatened by social and technical changes and who stand to incur various costs as a result of such changes manifest a tendency to oppose or resist these changes. On the other hand, those who stand to benefit from these changes tend to accept them with eagerness and much enthusiasm.

(v) **Role of The Change Agent**

The acceptance of or resistance to social change is also influenced in the role played by the change agent. It is important to the community or acceptors of change, who the proposer of the planned change is. Both his identity and how the originator of the change proposal or his agent goes about introducing the change, also makes a difference to the success or otherwise of the change programme. Change proposals which are first embraced or adopted by persons who are important powerful and

respected in society tend to be accepted more rapidly by the rest of society. On the other hand, innovations which are first adopted by persons of low status in society are less likely to be embraced by the rest of society, or at best adopted rather slowly and reluctantly by those at the upper echelons of society. This view is instructive for change agents who desire to make success of their project.

Change agents must also make the proposed change appear harmless by identifying or connecting it with familiar elements of the receiving culture. By suggesting compatibility in this manner the people are helped to perceive the intended change as a useful addition or modification to their culture complex. This of course presupposes that the change agent must have a good knowledge of the culture within which he is working. Otherwise he cannot successfully identify or tie his proposed change with existing features of the culture in question.

Change agents must comprehensively understand the interrelations of the culture which they tend to impact. It is only this way that they can successfully manage or implement the change programme, as well as predict the likely consequences of the proposed changes without understanding the people and their culture, the change agent may slide into costly mistake and assumptions that will mar the success of an otherwise well planned project.

Perhaps a change agent who is a stranger to another culture should first observe that culture with a view to understudying it for a period of time. This is a mandatory first step if his efforts are not to be counter productive.

3.4 Religion and Social Change: The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalisms

The relationship between religion and social change was analyzed by a German scholar, Max Weber. In his study of religion, Weber considered three main hypotheses. The first hypothesis deals with the effect of religious ideal on economic activities. The second, the relationship between religious ideals and social stratification and the third, the relationship between religious ideals and the different characteristics of western civilization. In the protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism, Weber sought to find out the relationship between religious ideals and the practical ethics of economic activities. He observed that religious beliefs under certain conditions would have a major influence on economic thought and behavior. Weber focused his analysis on certain protestant

groups which practiced asceticism. One of such groups was the Methodist revival led by John Wesley. He also studied Calvinism, Baptistism and Pietism. According to Calvinism God has already predetermined those who were to make heaven and those for hell. The evidence is to be shown in how successful an individual lives his life productively here on earth. For those marked for heaven, success must be exhibited in their chosen careers in life. Such Christians were to be ascetic. Asceticism is an act of living without physical pleasures and comforts especially for religious reasons. Weber insisted that these social oriented doctrines of Protestantism preceded industrial capitalism. He analysed the concept of calling. He explained that calling was the work set by God for the individual. Calling was an obligation which was imposed upon the individual by his position in the world. Labour in calling was regarded as the outward expression of brotherly love. The individual was to identify his area of calling by expressing his desire to do a particular work which could be carpentry, mechanic, teaching, etc. Having defined his career, the individual was required to be hardworking and committed in his chosen job since this was God's command. Success in his job was an indication of God's grace for him and an indication that he was marked for heaven. Making money was a clear evidence of the success of the individual in his calling.

John Wesley, leader of the Methodist revival, insisted that Christians must be hardworking and accumulate money. Money which must not be spent extravagantly on luxuries. Extravagant spending involves wasting money on clothing, houses and frivolous entertainments. Money gained through hardwork was to be re-invested in productive ventures that will generate future wealth. Wesley taught his congregation how to value time and use it wisely. They were taught that time was money and that time wasted was money lost in principle. Sleep was limited to six hours a day with a maximum of eight hours. Laziness, idleness and gossip were discouraged and condemned. The ethical principles of honesty, prudence, punctuality and justice were articulated among Christians. All these constituted the moral behavior which gave rise to efficiency and abundant production of goods and services. These came as a result of a rational, systematic, methodical and single minded pursuit of worldly calling. The continuous restlessness in business activities increased wealth and prosperity, accumulated capital which was reinvested. So, money making became a religious duty born out of the desire to be seen as marked for heaven. Thus, the creation of wealth and the limitations on consumption created savings and accumulated capital. All these added to the rise and development of industrial capitalism. These bits of evidences led Weber to conclude that there was a correlation

between certain forms of protestant Christianity and the rapid progress towards capitalism.

4.0 Conclusion

Social change refers to significant alteration in the social structure. Max Weber provided the most valuable work on religion and social change. In his classic work on protestant ethics and spirit of capitalism Weber has articulated the relationship between protestant teaching on ascetism and industrial capitalism. The teachings of John Wesley engendered in his congregation the spirit of hard work and frugality which provided the necessary impetus for capital accumulation that necessitated industrial capitalism.

5.0 Summary

In this Unit, we examined religion and social change, we looked at the concept of social change generally and examined the sources of social change. We looked at religion and social change in the society with specific reference to the protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Discuss the protestant ethics and show how it engendered the spirit of capitalism.
2. Discuss the factors affecting the rate of change in the society.

7.0 References/Further Reading

- Weber, M. (1958). The Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism. New York Charles Scribner Ltd.
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Course: Sociology of Religion

Module 2: Issues in Sociology of religion

Unit 5: Belief systems in African Religion

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1.0 Introduction

In traditional African religion several belief systems exist. These include Ancestor worship, magic and witchcraft. In this unit therefore we will examine these belief systems. Since we have looked at the general nature of belief our concern in this unit will be more on examining these belief systems with a view to understanding how each works.

2.0 Objectives

By the time you finished going through this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Explain ancestor worship as a belief system in Africa
- (ii) Describe the practice of witchcraft and how witches operate.
- (iii) Explain the concept of magic as a religious belief in Africa.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Ancestor Worship

Ancestor worship as a belief system is commonly found in Africa where people value unilinear descent. Ancestor worship is based on the belief that one's dead parents have link with the living and as such are capable of controlling events in the actual world of the living. They are believed to be able to family. In Africa, there is a belief in the of supernatural beings and ancestors are part of this complex spiritualized universe. The concept of ancestor presupposes the existence of descendants over which the ancestors exerts control and authority. Because they have the capacity to punish and reward, ancestors are believed to be in constant watch over the behavior of the living. It is also believed that at death the individual may be called upon by the ancestors to render account of his relationship with the Kinsmen left behind on earth. This belief help maintain morality and social control in Africa.

Communities and individuals conduct rituals in respect of dead ancestors in order to appease them and make request for their human needs of food, rain, children, bounty harvest and good health etc. In addition to these rituals, there may be seasonal occasions where elaborate ceremonies are organized for purification, drumming, dancing and singing. During new yam festivals for examples many communities come together to celebrate and thank their ancestors for giving them a bountiful harvest. The Bini, Yoruba and Igbo in Nigeria have these forms of ancestor worship. This form of religion is commonly found in Africa and parts of Asia (China). Where there is ancestor worship, the dead and past generations are structurally important to the living. However, no one remembers all his dead ancestors and predecessors. Generally, the dead are lumped together, known and called by different names collectively as the ancestors or the dead.

Many Africans believe that the universe is full of supernatural beings for example among the Asante as described by Busia(1965) the ancestors are part of the complex spiritualized universe. The ancestors derive their positions from the kinship and descent systems- to be ancestor, the dead must have had descendants, that is some status of parenthood. The dead is believed to “know” and reward or punish only his descendants. It is over his descendants that he is believed to have authority, they are the ones he can discipline and also the ones that can worship him as a “living dead”. In-married women also participate in ancestral religious worship in their twin capacities as married women and as mothers. Busia states that in Asante, ancestors are believed to be the custodians of the laws and customs, and punish offenders with sickness and misfortune. Ancestors are therefore in constant watch over the behavior of the living; at death anybody may be called upon by the body of ancestors to render account of his or her relationships in the world.

There are ward, town, and state rituals in connection with the collectively of dead ancestors at these levels. Normally the chief priest on such occasions of worship of the collective dead is the eldest man of the social group. Many African societies have religious worship of this kind. For example, among the Agni of the Ivory Coast, sacrifice is offered to the royal ancestors weekly. In this respect, cooked plantain, wine and palm oil are brought and offered on the royal stool. Stool among the Agni, as among the Asante and the royal shrines in several African societies are symbols of the dead and their presence, and power. Busia noted that “there are seasonal occasions when in addition to offerings and prayers to ancestors, there are elaborate ceremonies involving rites of purification, drumming dancing singing recital of (group) history. These rites give solemn and collective expression to those sentiments on which the social

solidarity of the group depends". Among many Africans, ancestors may be invoked on yearly ceremonial occasions, for example at new yam festivals among the Fon when goats, fowls, and pieces of yam are presented to the ancestors eaten by the chief priest and the celebrants at the royal shrines. The Bini, Igbo, Urhobo and Yoruba of Nigeria also have forms of ancestor worship as key parts of their chief systems,

African religion that is focused on ancestors is significant in creating and maintaining solidarity in the group and friendship and love amongst its members. It is to be noted too that royal ancestors, such as among the Swazi of South Africa, are believed to have an interest and general concern for the people in the total polity. Appeals are made to them for the good of the nation. Generally, the significance of such ancestor derived from their political position while alive. For the dead generally the state of being worshipped is promoted by good behavior and achievements on earth, hence an important distinction: a dead king or father may merely be remembered (say for his evil deeds) but not worshipped. In many respects, therefore, ancestors continue their worldly role, they make themselves relevant to society in this regard. Ancestor worship is a way of re-instating the status of the dead as regulator of social relations on earth. What ancestors are believed to do or are capable of doing is generally esteemed to be over and above what their capabilities and activities on earth would indicate. In some societies, a good or bad man becomes the ancestor of his descendants whatever his relationship with them must have been on earth; he is believed to behave in the general manner that ancestors are expected to behave.

Ancestor worship as a form of religion implies that the worldly family and community life is joined to that of their dead kinsman. Operationally, ancestor worship is a means of communion and communication with the supernatural world. Prayers, sacrifice, and offerings are important in African religion. While sacrifice involves the killing and presentation of the victim (an animal, chicken, etc) to God or any other supernatural being, an offering involves mainly the presentation of good or other consumable items to God or other supernatural beings. During both sacrifices and offering prayers are addressed to the supernatural. In his *African Religions and philosophy*, Mbiti offers four theories to explain the functions and meaning of sacrifices and offerings. These are the theories of gift-giving, propitiation, communion, and thanksgiving. Arinze(1970) states that sacrifice has four objectives: expiation, warding off molestation from unknown evil spirit, petition and thanksgiving. Thus in general sacrifices and offerings are devices of communication between the physical and the supernatural worlds, and

with reference to the ancestors, they function as means of appeasing the gods.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

Discuss ancestor worship as a religious form of belief.

3.2 Magic

Magic refers to belief aimed at the control of events and the environment. Magical activities involve secrecy and symbolism. They are useful in solving problems relating to economic and psychological realms. Among many African societies magic is useful in providing rain and sunshine for crops and for the prevention of draughts. Magicians are able to call for rain when there is drought. The supernatural can also be conjured to bring good luck and fortune to the people through magic. Among the trobriand Islanders, there is belief in magic as a means of controlling supernatural forces and especially those concerned with the dangers associated with open sea fishing. Magicians are believed to possess enormous powers of manipulation and may be resorted to act in times of desperation. They may be contacted to control weather and prevent disaster at important occasions in the community.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

Discuss the place of magic in traditional African religion.

3.3 Witchcraft

Witchcraft is a prominent belief among several African communities and peoples. Witches are generally believed to have some supernatural elements and powers by which they inflict harm on people especially their Kinsmen. They are reputed for meeting at night and in secret places where they project their will to harm people by turning into animals. A witch and her soul is in danger if such an animal or bird she has turned into is hurt or killed. Among the Tiv and Urhobo where belief in witchcraft held sway, witches are believed to leave their bodies and fly out in the form of spirits or birds and act on their victims either visibly or through some form of animal or bird. Witches are believed to be generally violent and would feed on the body of their victim thereby leading to death. Among the Nupe witches are believed to be able to take the spirit of their victims to their gathering and feasted on it. One Puzzling aspect of this belief is that while witches travel at night, their bodies remain at home with family members asleep. It is only the spirit of the witch that moves

about. In some instance witches are accused of prolonging illness, misfortunes and distress of their victims.

4.0 Conclusion

African societies have varying belief systems. Each belief system has its underlying cultural background. Among the Tiv where belief in the existence of witchcraft exist, seeing a rabbit or owl in the day time is an abomination and an indication of imminent danger. Some of the belief systems considered here are not exhaustive. The one's discussed are only a few selected for the purpose of this course.

5.0 Summary

In this unit we discussed some belief systems in traditional Africa. We discussed ancestor worship, witchcraft and magic. Ancestor worship is predicated on the belief that the dead members of the living have links with the living and can influence things for them. To appease them therefore sacrifices and rituals are conducted to provoke them to action. Witchcraft involves witches changing into animals and birds to torment their victims. They are believed to be capable of eating up their victims and would prolong their misfortunes and illness. Magic aims at controlling events for the good or bad of a people. Magic is used to control crop pests, control weather, rain and draught.

6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment

Discuss the phenomena of witchcraft and its effects on the society

7.0 Reference/Further Reading

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Course: Sociology of Religion

Module 3: The Role of Religion in the Society

Unit 1: The importance of Religion to Society

Unit 2: The importance of Society to Religion

Unit 3: Religion and Conflict in Nigeria

Unit 4: The Role of Religion in Politics in Nigeria

Unit 1: The importance of Religion to Society

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1.0 Introduction

We have so far looked at various aspects of religion. In this unit however we will look at the importance of religion to society. Since religion permeates all facets of life its importance to society cannot be under estimated.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

- (i) Explain the importance of religion to society
- (ii) Describe the role of religion in the maintenance of order and stability in the society.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Importance of Religion to Society

Religion as an aspect of culture that is so pervasive on the people generates and sustains its existence based on its importance to society. Sociologists are interested in the study of religion not merely because of its central theoretical problem but also of the import of its relationships to other areas of social life and of the roles, movements, and organizational strategies associated with it. Some sociologists argue that the institution of religion arose because of man's fear and uncertainties and his mental limitations in his environment. Malinowski has argued that religion provides a patterned and familiar way of overcoming life and environmental crisis and of the preparation and hope for comfortable future. Radcliffe-Brown(1952:148) has however presented a counter view insisting that '... if it were not for the existence of the rite and the beliefs associated with it, the individual would feel no anxiety, and that the psychological effect of the rite is to create in him a sense of insecurity or danger'. This means that religion and its rites to Malinowski actually produce fear in their process rather than be a solution to man's fears and anxiety. Yet, in general, man normally desires to show reverence to the supernatural and to appease and seek their cooperation in an uncertain world. Religion then is a mechanism of adjustment and of solving problems not only of overcoming anxiety but also of ordering one's relationship with the supernatural and in the process supporting social norms and integrating society and personalities(otite:1990:155). In

this task religion compliments and competes with other social institutions such as the political and economic.

Durkheim saw religion mainly as a tool for solidarity and intergration. For him religion contributes to law and order in the society by creating conditions for social wellbeing, self discipline, social cohesion and the continuity of cultures and tradition. Coser(1967) counters Durkheim by insisting that the historical evidence available has proved religion also to be divisive. This is especially true in situations where the existing religious groups tend to compete each other. Durkheim's solidarity must therefore be different from stability. Religion may not produce the two. As contained by Marx, religion is an 'opiate of the masses' designed to make them docile. It is an instrument for maintaining stratification systems and keeping the masses under subjugation. Religion is therefore a diversionary technique of shifting the attention of workers from their deplorable living and working conditions thereby creating low class docility while protecting and perpetuating existing inequalities. Religion make the poor look to heaven while accepting the exploitative order of the rich. Specifically, following are the importance of religion to society.

(a) Group Integration and Unity

Religion unites members of the society. It serves as a form of cementing element that bind people together into an integrated social group. Because adherents share common religious values and beliefs, participate in common religious rituals they become united as one group or community. By regularly bringing adherents together to re-enact beliefs commonly shared, religion promotes group sense of identity, oneness and unity which ensures cohesion. Group unity and solidarity is more prevalent during crisis situation when the group faces imminent threat to its existence and survival. During crisis religion provides a rallying point for members of a society by offering them hope for tomorrow. By part-taking in religious rituals adherents believe that their God is capable and at the appropriate time will answer them and provide solution to their problems.

(b) The Provision of Meaning

The world today is full of problems and diseases that sometimes make life seem meaningless. Religion provide doctrines that gives meaning and hope to life. Religion provide answers to the puzzling questions of human life, it origin, existence and ultimate opportunities of

life. Religion provide answers to misfortune and meaning to a seemingly meaningless world. It is religion that provides the truth about the world.

(c) Provision of Emotional and Psychological Support to Members of the Society.

In our society today that is full of problems, religion provide some form of emotional support to members of the society during events such as death, marriages and even when new ones are delivered into families. Important events in the life of the individual are marked by religious rituals and ceremonies. For example marriages, births, deaths, and appointment into higher offices and promotions are marked by one form of religious activity or the other. When misfortune befalls a member of the society, people from religious group often sympathize with him and rally round him to ensure that the necessary psychological support is given. Usually, members gather round the affected member to provide the necessary company and sharing in the problem. If an individual is bereaved for example members would usually come together to provide company in form of wake-keeps over a period of time. This is done so as to avoid fear, loneliness that may accompany the calamity and to provide the necessary assistance in terms of labour during burial.

(d) Religion And The Docility of People In The Society.

It is the thinking of a number of scholars especially those that belong to the Marxian tradition that religion makes adherent docile and unable to question events. Religious adherents are made to unquestionably accept their lot in the society. Marxian thinkers view religion as an extreme form of human alienation and exploitation. To Marxist religion is a tool used by the dominants class in the society to oppress the less privileged ones. Thus, Marxist insists that the importance of religion to society is to support the status quo and divert the attention of the oppressed masses from the real source of their problems.

(e) Religion and the Control of Stress in the Society

Majority of religions of the world preach self denial and rejection of the materialism of the present world. They appeal to their members to try by all means possible to direct their energies towards making heaven. Members are urged to see present problems as tribulations which must come to pass. Adherents are encouraged to keep their store of wealth in heaven where it is safe and there is no destruction. This doctrinal condemnation of worldly wealth and materialism pacifies the mind of

members and gives them hope for a better tomorrow thereby helping in discharging stress, frustration and anxiety.

(f) Maintenance of Social Control.

Every society has its rules, laws, norms and legal prohibitions which define the limits to which individual can seek legitimate achievements. Societal laws relating to offences such as theft, murder, rape, assault etc are derived from the laws of God found in the bible. Religious rules legitimize secular laws and are therefore more potent in controlling behavior in society. Indeed since people perceive the contravention of religious laws as sin against God, the link between secular laws and those of religion help in social control of people in the society.

4.0 Conclusion

The importance of religion in the society emanates from the fact that religion provide meaning to life. Man is perplexed by the seemingly meaningless world of his existence. His problems are compounded by the fact that getting answers and solutions to the riddles of life seems a difficult task. Religion provides solution to most of man's pressing problems of life. It provides psychological and emotional support during times of distress. Religion provides an outlet for the discharge of stress and above all provides answers to the puzzling questions that bewildered man.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

How does religion help in providing meaning to life?

5.0 Summary

In this unit we looked at the importance of religion to society. We stated that religion as a phenomenon that cut across all facets of life of man is very important in several ways. Religion enhances group unity and solidarity, provide meaning to life, help in the control of stress, provides emotional and psychological support as well as ensure the maintenance of social control. Religion is therefore an inevitable aspect of the society. This explains why religion is found in all societies of the world.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

Outline and explain the importance of religion to the society.

7.0 References/Further Reading

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Course: Sociology of Religion

Module 3: The Role of Religion in the Society

Unit 2: The Importance of Society to Religion

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1.0 Introduction

In the last unit we looked at the importance of Religion to the society. In this unit however we will consider the importance of society to Religion.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Explain the importance of society to Religion.
- (ii) Highlight the role society play in sustaining the institution of religion.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Importance of Society to Religion

The society comprise of several elements that are fused together to form the whole called society. Society consists of land, population, relationship, institutions, culture and work. Religion and its practices do not take place in a vacuum. Indeed, religious beliefs, values, norm and practices are in themselves codified values of the society. The society becomes important to religion in that it is from the society that religion derives its values and norms. Also, religion require practitioners and adherents who are members of the society for its existence. It requires the clergy, worshippers and indeed members of the laity who holds beliefs in the existence of the supernatural being projected by religion. This body of human beings resides in the society. The society therefore provides religion with worshippers who constitute its membership and congregation. It is these members of the congregation that provides the organization and manpower needed for the daily running of the institution of religion. The institution of religion is such a complex one that require elaborate organization and structures to operate must be clearly set out and delineated.

Again, society convey legitimacy to religious practices indulged in by adherents. Religious practices that are against the norms and values of the society are rejected by the society. For example, the practice of human sacrifice among some religious groups have been frowned at and condemned by members of the society. Religious rituals that involve the

use of human blood, maltreatment of members of the congregation and illicit sexual activities involving the clergy and communicants have attracted condemnation from members of the society. Indeed it will be impossible to have religion if there is no society.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

Discuss the activities members of your community do to encourage the growth of the local church in your community.

4.0 Conclusion

The importance of society to Religion derives from the fact that it is the society that provide the necessary support for the establishment and continued survival of religion. Society provides the necessary materials management, infrastructure and moral requirements necessary for the survival of religion. Society legitimizes all forms of religious practices that its members imbibe. Through this way society provides the necessary bench marks for religious practices.

5.0 Summary

In this unit we examined the importance of society to religion. Society comprised of institutions, people, land, social relationships, culture and work. Religion as an aspect of culture is one of the institutions of the society. Religion therefore depends on the society for its survival and continued relevance. It is the society that gives legitimacy to religion. It is also the society that provide the manpower for the institution of religion. It provides the institutions that train manpower for religious activities.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

Discuss the importance of society to religion.

7.0 Reference/Further Reading

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Module 3: The Role of Religion in the Society

Unit 3: Religion and Conflict in Nigeria

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1.0 Introduction

In this unit, we will be looking at religion and conflicts in Nigeria. The arbitrary colonial demarcations have placed people with differing cultural and religious background together to form entities that are not compatible with each other. This has over the years been the root of conflicts that have engulfed Nigeria. We will therefore look at the place of religion in conflicts in Nigeria, the causes of religious conflicts and the effects such conflicts have on the society.

2.0 Objectives

After going through this course unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Explain the place of religion in conflicts in Nigeria.
- (ii) Identify the causes of religious conflicts.
- (iii) State the effects of such conflicts on the society

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Place of Religion in Conflicts in Nigeria.

The phenomenon of religion has been proved to unite people in many societies of the world. In Nigeria however, religion has thrown the country into series of conflicts of alarming dimension. The plural nature of the Nigerian society may have worsened matters as the different nationalities have different religious beliefs. The religious situation in Nigeria is such that every conflict that appear to be politically motivated end up turning religious. This is because people find it easy to generate support and membership when religion is involved in any conflict. The background to religious conflicts in Nigeria is traceable to the activities of colonialism which have arbitrarily demarcated and placed people of different religious entities and background into single group or community. In most situations, those groups are in mutual distrust of each other. Also the development of commerce and the emergence of cities ensure that people travel to distant places to buy and sell goods and services. Many of these businessmen and women became settlers in cities

where they own large shops. Again, the establishment of schools and industries attracted a pool of people to cities where they work for salaried wage. Through these processes, cities like Kano, Zaria, Ibadan, Lagos etc became full of people of different religious background. This has been the case of religious conflicts in Kano, Jos, Maiduguri and Kaduna. The present day religious conflicts in Kano can only be clearly understood within the context of modern migrations into the city (Otite 1999). This is a reference to the influx of Southern Nigerians into the city for trade. The first church in Kano was established in 1911. The colonial Urban development policy restricted the construction of churches to the Sabon Gari area. Up to the early 1980s there was no open hostility between the Christians and Muslims in Kano. This situation began to change in the late 1980s. There was a rapid growth of Christian Churches in Nigeria, with many of their members professing 'born again' theology. The manner in which most of these born again Churches carry out their activities often bring them into open hostilities with their Muslim counterparts. The situation in Kano is not very different from other cities such as Kaduna, Jos and Zaria that have recently become centers of religious unrest in the country.

The way Christians propagate their faith has sometimes been considered objectionable to Muslims. For example, when preaching Christians usually present Jesus as the only way to the kingdom of God. All other ways including the Islamic way would only lead one to hell. This type of preaching is conducted in buses, market places, churches and at dawn and as such anger Muslims. Over the years several religious conflicts have occurred in Jos, Zaria, Kano and Kaduna. There was Fagge crisis in 1992, the Reinhard Bonnke riot of 1991, the Jos crisis of September 2001 and the Kaduna riots.

Self Assessment Exercise

Discuss the place of religion in conflicts in Nigeria.

3.2 Causes of Religious Conflicts

A number of causes of religious conflicts have been identified. Some of which include:

(i) The problem of cultural integration

Religious conflicts involving Christians and Muslims have been traceable to the problem of cultural integration. In Nigeria, when a person

migrate from his place of origin to another, he finds himself threatened or intimidated by the dominant social, political, cultural and religious groups. The migrant in Nigeria continue to be arrogated the status of a migrant no matter how long he lives in his new community. Such a migrant is faced with three major problems of survival; assimilation, pacific co-existence and animosity (Samin Amin: 1974). Where the migrant refuse to assimilate due to deep rooted religious differences they are bound to be treated with animosity especially when efforts at pacific co-existence fail to produce the desired results. This is true in the case of religious conflicts involving Christians and Muslims in the Northern part of Nigeria. Though Southerners has lived in many parts of Northern Nigeria since the early twentieth Century, most of them saw themselves as strangers. They resisted cultural assimilation. To be completely assimilated and accepted by the local inhabitant's one need to accept Islam and dress in the usual Hausa long robe, a situation the Christians objected.

Also the Igbo Christian is considered to exert control over commercial businesses in the Northern areas where they find themselves, for example, the Igbo Christian is known to be in control of 80% of the total business activities around the Sabon gari settlement. The indigenes misconstrued this as monopoly which they vow to break. Indeed, the 1995 crisis at Sabon gari market in Kano stems from this fact. It was alleged that the Igbo discourage and intimidate other ethnic groups form setting up shops in the market and were paying landlords higher rents as a way of depriving the local Hausa-Fulani people access to such shops.

(ii) Religious intolerance and fanaticism.

There is high degree of religious intolerance among Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. This partly explains why every conflict in Nigeria has a religious undertone. In the North where most religious conflicts take place, religious intolerance cut across all religious groups. The Muslims are opposed to Christians and the orthodox Muslims would have nothing to do with the members of the fundamental sects. The Muslims would want the Christians to respect the Islamic religion as the Koran has enjoined the Muslim to respect people of the book. In any case, such a respect is lacking in the case of Muslim-Christian relationship in Nigeria. Christians openly preach to denounce the Islamic faith and would distribute hand bills considered offensive when organizing crusades. The Muslim on the other hand would not tolerate foul language and general disregard to their religion. This was the immediate cause of the Reinhard Bonke riots in Kano in 1991.

(ii) The influence of Non-Nigerian Muslim migrants.

The conflict situation is often aggravated by the presence of Muslim immigrants from neighboring Chad Republic, Niger and other North African Countries. The majority of fighters who took part in maitatsine wars were found to be Non-Nigerians. In every religious fight that occurs in the North, police arrest has indicated that many of the fighters are Non-Nigerians.

(iii) Urban Poverty: -

Poverty is important in understanding how Muslim fundamentalist recruit their men that are used in executing religious riots. Most of the people who fought on the side of the maitatsine in 1980 were the urban poor and destitute. Many of these recruits are young men who came to the city to look for jobs but found none and decided to stay on their own. These are often recruited and used by the militants to destabilize the society.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

List and explain the causes of religious conflicts in Nigeria.

3.3 Impact of Religious Conflict on the Society

Religious Conflicts has damaging impact on the society. During each religious conflict several hundreds of lives and property worth millions of Naira are lost.

These losses are experienced by both the original indigenes and settlers in their midst. This has forced strangers to move to other cities that are less violent. The impact of this movement is the gradual decline in business activities. The religious conflicts also divided the people of the affected areas. The much expressed unity, stability and trusts is nonexistent as a result of riots and killings that ensued. Consequently, no one is any longer his brother's keeper as trust no longer prevails.

Agricultural activities are also grounded as people who are expected to farm crops no longer feel safe on the farms. Every religious crisis goes with it the destruction of markets where Agricultural produce can be sold. Also, transportation is disrupted and this goes a long way to affect Agricultural production.

Public utilities are deliberately vandalized and damaged. Electrical installations, telecommunication equipment and water works are damaged. Unreliable or poor performance of public utilities will affect productivity. The provision of social amenities is also affected, schools, hospitals,

clinics, markets, parks and estates are destroyed. Religious buildings become targets of destruction by rioters.

4.0 Conclusion

Religious Conflicts have been a manipulated phenomenon such that though a particular conflict may be political, communal or even economic motivated yet it will be given a religious undertone. Religion has been used by political and ethnic based politicians to advance their cause. In Nigeria, therefore it is at the level of religion that both the learned and the unlearned converge.

5.0 Summary.

In this unit, we have examined the place of religion in Conflicts in Nigeria. We have looked at the causes of religious conflicts generally and the impact such conflicts have on the society. Religious conflicts have been found to impact negatively on the society. It has depopulated the communities, destroyed properties and infrastructure. Religious conflicts have retarded Agricultural development and slowed down business and commercial activities in affected areas. It has retarded and crippled communication, transport and created disharmony and disunity among warring communities.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

Discuss the impact of religious Conflict on the society.

7.0 References/Further Reading

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COURSE: Sociology of Religion

MODULE 3: The Role of Religion in the Society.

UNIT 4: The Role of Religion in politics in Nigeria.

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1.0 Introduction

The involvement of religion in political activities in

Nigeria dates back to the pre-colonial period. By 1940s embryonic political associations began to be organized by the educated youths who were exposed to nationalist thought from abroad. One major characteristic of these early political associations was that they were highly tribalized. In this chapter therefore we shall examine the role of Religion in politics in Nigeria. We will examine the historical development of the involvement of Religion in politics from pre-colonial period to the present day.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Explain the role of religion in politics
- (ii) Discuss the nature of involvement of religion in politics in Nigeria

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Role of Religion in Politics in Nigeria

The Role of religion in politics in Nigeria is traceable to the pre-independence built up as formation of political associations began to take root. Indeed, Christian missionaries were instrumental to the formation of political associations and in raising the political consciousness of the local people. The radical political changes after the Second World War transformed the framework of missionary strategy as well as the relationship between missionaries and converts. They were aware of the fact that if not the right people emerge as leaders after independence, their efforts may be in vain. Fear was based on the experiences of missionaries in China in 1949, when they were expelled from the country. Thus, the missionaries became sensitive about political change which threatened their work. In central Nigeria, for example, in order to present a coordinated response to the political situation, the missionaries met at Bukuru Jos in 1948 to consider a Christian response. The churches resolve to raise the consciousness of members and to warn them about the dangers of refusing to involve themselves in political activities. Besides, there was the fear of Muslim domination of Christians in the political

arrangements. This led to the formation of the Northern Non- Muslim League (NNML) in 1949 under the leadership of Pastor David Lot. By 1950, the Northern Non- Muslim League was renamed the middle zone League (MZL). As the 1951 elections drew nearer, it became very obvious to Christians that Muslims would dominate the new political era in the country. Churches became the rallying point for the Christians and the missionaries began to instill in their clergy and converts, the idea of an impending Muslim domination and the need to sit up. The churches became involved in political campaigns. The problem was not that of the credibility of the candidate, it became a matter of from which religious background he comes from.

Christian Politicians justify their involvement in politics by using the Bible. They sought not only the political kingdom, but the kingdom of God as well. Their work was therefore to unite the two into a Christian political kingdom. The Christians and Muslims alike sought to participate in politics so as to improve the infrastructure, health system, education, economy and the judiciary. They wanted to provide direction in politics since many have perceived politics as a dirty game. The role of religion therefore is to sanitize and provide direction to politics for the benefit of humanity. It is in the light of the above thinking that religious bodies rose strongly to condemn the annulment of June 12 elections widely believed to have been won by chief Moshood Abiola. The Christian Association of Nigeria rose from its meeting with a declaration condemning the annulment and all other forms of human injustices. In a similar vein the ecumenical council of Nigeria condemned the annulment. By doing this religion serves as the watch dog of the society. Like the prophets in the bible, religious leaders in Nigeria have been criticizing government policies that are not in favour of the people; policies that dehumanizes the personality of the individual. Religion has also been manipulated by politicians to serve their personal needs. Declaration for political electioneering campaigns are made in churches. Indeed, the politicians always see the church as the first place of call for political support. Thanks giving services often become veritable grounds for political campaigns.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

Discuss the role of missionaries in politics during the built up to the first Republic elections in Nigeria.

4.0 Conclusion

Historically, Religion and politics have maintained a relationship over a long period of time. The church and politics have been involved in the governance of the people. During the Roman Empire, it was the church and government that were involved in making decisions that were bothering on the general well being of the people. Politicians have found in religion an avenue for portraying their ambitions. Religion has been manipulated by politicians to their advantage. In Nigeria, beginning with the First Republic the church has been playing various roles ranging from advisory to full participation in politics. Religious leaders have been speaking against one form of injustice or the other. They have been strong supporters of the rule of law, justice and equality.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, we dealt with the role of religion in politics in Nigeria. We mentioned the very fact that religion has had varying influence on politics. The built up to the First Republic elections witnessed an unprecedented jostling as to who will step into the shoes of the colonial masters. The jostling was between Muslims and Christians who wanted their own to win elective positions by all means. From this point onwards, religion has been an integral part of politics in Nigeria.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment

Discuss the role of religion in politics in Nigeria

7.0 References/Further Reading

Ellias, T. O (1963). Government and Politics in African. London: Asia publishing Ltd.

Schapera, I. (1956). Government and Politics in Tribal Societies. London: Watts