THE SAGE Encyclopedia of the
SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

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1

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movement in Nigeria was quite peaceful, unlike other Mahdist movements that encourage jihad.

In his book, *Mahdism in West Africa: The Ijebu Mahdiyya Movement*, Clarke explained that Ijebu Mahdiyya permits 'the doctrinal basis for the creation of a new "religion of the spirit" in which Christians and Muslims, without apostatizing, can worship together' (p. 10). He thus analysed this peaceful movement in terms of its degree of syncretism to extract its 'religious innovation' aspect. His ideas on millennialism theory and his interest in contemporary African religions are the topic of this book.

Clarke's success in understanding the peaceful Mahdiyya movement resulted from his personal theoretical approach as outlined in *Religion Defined and Explained* (1993) coauthored with Peter Byrne. His 'large-scale theory' is characteristically radical, taking into account the specifics of religious history and the interconnections between religious ideas. He used the existing theories provided in religious studies, philosophy, sociology, and psychology to provide an account of operational and essentialist definitions of religion. His theory provides an analysis that goes beyond mere description; it aims to understand the how and why of each religion in its specific social–cultural context, within the global context.

Clarke's interest in NRMs, African religions, and his theory have been interdependent on one another for his successful research. He began his career living in Africa and developed his theory to understand African religions. His background inspired him on his career quest to study more NRMs on a large-scale theory. His approach to scholarship was interdependent with a 'global cohort' of his research students for their mutual benefit and a greater contribution to the field of sociology of religion.

Tadaatsu Tajima

See also African Religions; Engaged Buddhism; Globalisation; New Religious Movements; Popular Religion; Transnationalism

Further Readings

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CLASS

A class denotes a category of people with a shared market position (the Weberian tradition) or a common relationship to the means of production (the Marxist tradition) that defines shared economic interests, even though those concerned are neither necessarily aware of this nor necessarily identify with each other. Whereas in political sociology it is not uncommon to understand class-based economic interests as determining people's political values and voting behavior, sociologists of religion typically forge the link between class and religion in a less deterministic and more open-ended fashion.

The class approach to religion finds its roots in Marxist historical materialism, which assumes an economic base to give shape to a cultural superstructure that among other things includes religion. Religion is conceived here as a basically irrational set of beliefs that ideologically mystifies the true nature of capitalism and the harsh economic realities of the industrial working class it entails. It does so by promising eternal salvation from economic suffering and injustice in a future afterlife—hence the Marxist characterization of religion as "opium of the people." Even though theories about religion as a response to class deprivation have not disappeared since Marx's days, they have had less influence on the further development of sociology of religion than Durkheim's and Weber's accounts.

The two most important studies of religion that foreground class are influenced by German theologian-cum-sociologist Ernst Troeltsch's classical work on the dismissive stances of sects vis-à-vis their social environments including the established churches that identify with the latter. In *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, published in the 1920s, H. Richard Niebuhr addresses

the issue of religious fragmentation and points out economic inequality as one of its principal causes. The established churches, he contends, tend to cater to privileged and well-off classes, whereas sect formation entails protest by the economically deprived against these churches, leading Niebuhr to characterize sects as "the churches of the disinherited." Niebuhr understands class inequality as a major source of religious change through sect formation by the economically deprived.

A similar argument can be found in *Religion and Society in Tension*, published in the mid-1960s by Charles Glock and Rodney Stark. The book presents the so-called deprivation theory of religion, which understands religion as offering compensation for experiences of deprivation. Much like Niebuhr before them, Glock and Stark identify economic class deprivation as a major type of deprivation besides others, maintaining that it sparks sect formation and religious change. Due to the central axiom that religion offers compensation for experiences of deprivation, the theory foreshadows Stark's later influential, though not uncontested, rational choice theory of religion (e.g., *The Future of Religion* with William Sims Bainbridge).

Despite these books and the studies that have sought inspiration from them, it would be fair to say that most accounts of class and religion have refused to reduce religion and religious change to class inequality. A less materialistic and deterministic approach opts for a bidirectional logic and downplays the notion of causal determination of religion by class-based deprivation.

Here, the notion of *classes* is also used more liberally, referring in fact not so much to categories with common economic interests but rather to status groups with shared cultural outlooks and lifestyles. In this alternative understanding, classes (or, rather, status groups) are understood as feeling attracted to particular religions, often even being shaped by the latter, just as the other way around particular religious groups are understood as feeling attracted to the lifestyles of particular status groups.

This is the classical Weberian logic of *Wahlverwandtschaft* [elective affinity], according to which religions and status groups attract (positive elective affinity) or repel (negative elective affinity) each other. The result is the emergence of links between religions and carrier groups, which gives religion societal impact and significance, be it by conserving and legitimizing the status quo or more or less radically transforming it. The classical example of this type of analysis is of course Weber's analysis of the mutual attraction between middle-class entrepreneurship and puritan-style Protestantism.

In the hands of this particular carrier group, the latter's inner-worldly asceticism (i.e., the foregrounding of hard work in a professional calling and a sober lifestyle defined by delayed gratification) made a major contribution to the breakthrough of modern capitalism and rationalized modernity generally. Weber's comparative sociology of religion aimed to demonstrate how other world religions boasted elective affinities with very different carrier groups that rather stood in the way of rationalization. Examples are China's Confucianist mandarins, who occupied administrative positions in the imperial bureaucracy; the Brahmins, the highest caste within the Hindu caste system; and the Buddhist monks who lived in secluded monasteries. All lacking the fateful combination of inner-worldliness and asceticism, these non-Western examples according to Weber impeded rationalization rather than stimulating it.

Although sociology of religion has surely not been witnessing a disappearance of the tendency to reduce religion to class-based economic interests, it has nonetheless increasingly given way to analyses in terms of elective affinities between status groups and religions. Echoing Troeltsch, for instance, Colin Campbell's characterization of the type of post-Christian spirituality that has emerged in the West since the 1960s as "the secret religion of the educated classes" invokes neither class-based economic interests nor the economic determinism that comes with it.

Dick Houtman

See also Deprivation Theory; Elective Affinity; Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich; Troeltsch, Ernst; Weber, Max

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CLERGY

The origin of the term "clergy" is the Greek word *kleros*, which literally means "share," "inheritance," and "allotment." Its usage can be traced to the Old Testament practice of casting lots performed by the Jewish priests (Deuteronomy 18) and to the New Testament notion (1 Peter 5:3) of sharing (*kleros*) or contribution to be given by the members to each elder in a Christian community. In other religions, the word *clergy* is used to indicate functionaries rather than the prevailing hierarchical structure—for example, *mullahs* in Islam, *rabbis* in Judaism, and *pujaris* in Hinduism.

General Concept

Clergy is an occupation but a unique kind of occupation. Compared with other professionals, clergy is composed of learned persons who possess knowledge and abilities not accessible to the people at large and the community. Clergy is a group of authorities who are entitled to make decisions based on their faculty and empowered to be relatively and fundamentally autonomous.

On one hand, clergy claim to have the capacity in their own domain, which gives them prestige and influence. On the other hand, clergy is distinguished to be in their positions due to religious impetus, not out of expectation for monetary gain or stipend. Moreover, their competency is based neither on scientific nor technical know-how but traditional sources and sacred texts.

In some religious groups, such as the Roman Catholic Church, clergy is expected to live a frugal and celibate life so that they can dedicate themselves to the Church and its community. Likewise, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim clergy are financially supported by their constituents. They need to maintain support from their members to sustain their ministry. No other profession is subject to approval and sustenance of the laypeople; therefore, clergy persons can be compared with local politicians who are also approved or elected by the people.

Christian Tradition

In a Christian church, *clergy* refers to a body of ordained and delegated ministers. The New Testament shows a varied form of religious ministry. By the end of the 1st century, the bishop or overseer was responsible in presiding over worship and in taking care of the poor in a community, in collaboration with elders or priests supported by deacons.

During the first part of the 2nd century, the New Testament paradigm of the Church as the body in which all parts are equally necessary under the headship of Christ was altered by the allegory of a hierarchical institution with a clear command structure inspired by the Roman army. Eventually, the *clericalization* of the Catholic Church subjugated the laypeople in decision-making, a condition that some tried to overturn during the Reformation period. Another classification of clergy arose, with the growth of monasticism, between secular clergy who work in the "world" (*saeculum*) and regular clergy who live under a "rule" (*regula*), typically in religious congregations.

The Catholic Church has shown initiatives to reclaim the Body of Christ model and reimplement the collegiality or shared responsibilities of the members of the Church when the 2nd Vatican Council (1962–1965) was convened. This council also maintained that the laity should be empowered because they are the vast majority and have important roles to fulfill in the Church. Accordingly, the laity should be part of the policy making and decision-making of the Church.

Issues and Concerns

The Catholic Church has experienced a scarcity of seminarians and a shortage of priests over the last decades. In contrast, Protestant churches have not experienced a shortage in ordinations. In 1987, a survey among Catholic college students was conducted to pinpoint the main reasons preventing men from becoming priests. Celibacy as a requisite was discovered to be the most significant deterrent and that if celibacy were considered