

# Religion, the Individual and Society

## The secularisation debate

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Name and date begun:

### Time allocation:

5 lessons

### Learning objectives:

- Students should have a working definition of religion.
- Students should be aware of the difficulties in defining the nature of religious commitment.
- Students should appreciate that the nature of religious practice in Britain has changed significantly and that there is public concern and debate about this fact.
- Students should recognise that changes in church attendance and the nature of religious belief may be indicators of significant changes in the nature of community and social life in Western society.

### Key Concepts and vocabulary

See your lesson notes in addition to the following:

- Secularisation
- Democracy
- Non-conformity
- Disestablishment
- Indicators (indices) of spirituality
- The role of the state

### Additional reading and references

All of the textbooks have large sections on the secularisation debate and you are advised to return to this topic regularly and to add to your notes. It is a very likely area of questioning for the examinations. Be sure that you have some statistical comments to make about church attendance and the importance of minority religions.

Selfe and Starbuck (1998) *Access to Sociology: Religion* Ch. 6

Giddens (1997) *Sociology 3<sup>rd</sup> edition* p 465 ff.

Taylor et al (1996) *Sociology in Focus* p 521 – 31

Marcus and Ducklin (1998) *Success in Sociology* p 639 – 47

**Make a note of any additional sources that you have used below**

## **Personal Development ideas**

- Make notes from as many sources as possible and share these notes with others in the group.
- Talk to someone who is very much older than you are about the role of religious belief and practice in their early lives.
- Talk to people who say that they have no belief in God to discover the reasons for their lack of religious faith.
- Talk to people who say that they are religious but do not attend a place of worship on a regular basis to see why they do not subscribe to organised religions

## **Overview of the debate**

- How does one measure religious belief?
- What role did religious belief play in society in the past?
- Is secularisation taking place?
- If so, why is it taking place?
- If it is not taking place, what is happening to the nature of religious belief in our society?

## **Revision tips**

- Be certain that you have some data on church, synagogue, mosque, and temple attendance.
- Make sure that you have some clear understandings of the secularisation debate

## **What you should have in your folder when this work has been completed correctly:**

- A clear explanation of each of the glossary terms
- Acceptable lesson notes.
- Evidence that you have looked at least two textbooks and made notes.
- Evidence of a simple survey into people's opinions as to the nature and significance of religion in our society.
- Evidence of simple surveying of people's habits of attendance at formal religious ceremonies.
- Notes and an essay written to the question:

**Evaluate the suggestion that religion in Britain is losing its social significance.**