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## The Theories of Emile Durkheim and Clifford Geertz and Their Relation to Religion

Religion is such a big factor in today's world, more than 83 percent of the world's population believes in a religion and considers themselves religious. To start off I am not really a religious person, but if someone were to ask me what does religion mean to me I would respond; to me religion realizes the things that affect an entire community, but also the personal and individual needs. Also, religion is how the world views it and the symbols that make up a religion. To support my opinion about religion I have chosen two highly known theorist, Emilé Durkheim and Clifford Geertz. Their theories and method will help support my definition of religion by tying it into their theories.

Being sacred, seeing the affects things have and realizing what is important is what religion is structured around. As said in the book, "All known religious beliefs, whether simple or complex, present one common characteristic: they presuppose a classification of all the things, real and ideal into two classes or opposed groups, profane and sacred" (pg.103 Emile Durkheim: The Social as Sacred) brings attention to Durkheim's theory of sacred vs. profane. According to Durkheim, for his theory of sacred vs. profane, he says that "sacred is the realm of important matters, the great concerns that affect the life of the entire community," which supports my opinion that when something big effects an entire religion community it will be a big concern that they all take seriously. Also, Durkheim said, "Religion is the system of beliefs and practices that relates sacred things in the life of a community," which supports the important matters that affect a community. Sacred things can not be touched by the profane and can not touch with impunity because it is par excellence. All societies and religions categorize things as either sacred or profane, and according to Durkheim the sacred part of a religion is tied to being holy. The sacred are all things set apart as special, and to have high symbolic values, society demands reverence and awe towards them. Also, anything can be sacred to a religion, it doesn't have to just be gods or spirits that are sacred.

Apart from religion being sacred and having important matters that affect an entire community, it is also important to realize that religion ties into personal needs. Everyone has their own needs that need to be attended to when being religious, no matter what religion they are in.

Durkheim's profane part of his sacred vs. profane theory states, "profane is the realm of things personal and private. The daily minor needs of the individual," which supports my opinion that everyone has their own needs that need to be met. To me it is important that you maintain a job that supports your family and puts food on the table, you pay your bills and go through life struggles, like being late to work and not being able to get your morning coffee. Just because

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you are religious and part of a religion group, does not mean you need to be entirely devoted to that religion and base your whole life around it. Durkheim said, "The profane is the ordinary everyday thing that has no sacred or symbolic meaning to a religion." Therefore, being profane in a religion has a big role. A source online states, "The profane embraces those ideas, persons, practices and things that are regarded with an everyday attitude of commonness, utility and familiarity," which supports my reasoning that having a life outside of your religion is okay.

It is important for a religion to be surrounded by sacred and meaningful symbols. I feel that if something is important to you and really impacts your life it should have some symbol that represents it. For example, the flag is a symbol of freedom and liberty for the United States of America. Another example would be when girls want to wait till marriage, are pure, and abstinence, they wear purity rings to symbolize that. Although some important things don't have a symbol, I think having a symbol represent something so close to you is a strong factor because it shows the importance of it, and shows what it really embodies. In the book it says, "it denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life." (pg.349 Clifford Geertz: Religion as World-View and ethic.) That quote in the book shows how strong and important sacred symbols tie to a religion. Clifford Geertz's definition is that sacred symbols synthesizes a people's ethos, character, and quality of their life, its morals and aesthetic style and mood. Geertz also stated that symbols are tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgements, longing, or beliefs. Those theories support my opinion on the importance of a sacred symbol.

World view is how the world sees something as a whole and how they comprehend it. It is the picture they have of the way things in sheer actually are, their most comprehensive ideas of order. Sometimes the worldview doesn't necessarily have the same views as other people, which can either cause confrontation or better understanding. That is why I think world view of a religion is a key component, because seeing how the entire world sees a religion compared to how an individual sees a religion helps better understand things. Geertz said religion deals with our picture of the world and our understanding of the order of existence. When our picture of the world fails chaos occurs at the limits of our analytic capabilities, the limits for our powers for endurance and the limits of our moral insights. What Geertz said helps support my opinion that the world view about religion is a key component, whether or not people agree with the world view.

If you ask people what religion means the answer will vary from people to people. But to me, religion notices the important matters and affects it has on an entire community, but also personal and private needs of individuals. Having sacred symbols represent a religion is a big

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factor that shows how important a religion is and what it really is made of. Lastly, the world view of religion is important, even if people don't agree, because it gives a bigger picture and may make people see something they didn't before. To help support my opinion I used two important theorists, Emilé Durkheim and Clifford Geertz, and their theories. Religion is widely spread throughout the world, and everyone one will have different meaning and definitions of religion.

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