SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION
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1. *A description of what the article is about*
This article provides an overall view of sociology of religion, theories, empirical approaches and state of art, to conclude with some reflections on future developments.

2. *Theoretical approaches*
There has been much discussion of possible definitions of religion. Generally a distinction is made between a substantive and a functional approach. The substantive approach may be exemplified by Durkheim (1995) when he speaks of "beliefs and practices" as the ground of the "moral community" called a "church". Luckmann (1967) is said to demonstrate the functional approach when he refers to "symbolic universes" as "socially objectified systems of meaning" by way of "social processes" considered as "fundamentally religious", "which lead to the formation of the Ego" and the "transcendence of biological nature".

However, when we make a thorough exploration of Durkheim's and Luckmann's writings, we observe that Durkheim is also alive to function (religion helps solidarity), and that Luckmann is not only concerned with function (religion is a conception of the world made up of specific contents). Thus in reality those quoted as exemplary champions of one ore other perspective emerge as more possibilistic and open to less rigid, more polyvalent formulations. In short, contents and functions are inseparable, and should rather be considered as a unique whole which permits realizing much more complex and interconnected analytical and interpretative procedures.

For example, we might start from the idea that the meta-empirical referent in attributing meaning to human existence is a particular characteristic of religion. At the same time, however, it is sensible to leave an opening also for responses which do not envisage an explicit referral to the dimension of the empirical non verifiability and the inaccessibility of direct experience. Thus, a meta-empirical referent would possess a merely indicative character, or, in Blumer's (1954) term, that of "sensitizing". "In this way there is no conflict between the transcendent level and that of the real. It is rather as though we were to look at the same object from two different viewpoints; the canalizing of a non-human presence within reality. One vision does not exclude the other. They are not in opposition and indeed at times they may converge on the same conclusion - the understanding-explanation of life in a religious key" (Cipriani 1997: 15).

Thomas Luckmann's theorization regarding the "invisible religion" (Luckmann 1967) has attracted much attention on the part of sociologists, even though it has not always brought scientific consensus. The idea of a functional substitution of church religion by a series of topics such as "individual autonomy, auto-expression, auto-fulfilment, mobility ethos, sex and familism" has developed parallel to the theory of secularization.

The debate was very lively at that period, as has been well demonstrated first by Karel Dobbelaere (1981) and, lastly, Olivier Tschannen (1992), and involved such authors as Sabino Samele Acquaviva (1961; 1979), Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark (1965), Hermann Lübbe (1965), Bryan R. Wilson (1966), Peter L. Berger (1967; 1969), Thomas O'Dea (1966), Richard K. Fenn (1969; 1970 and 1978), David Martin (1969, 1978).

Luckmann further believes that the modern sacred cosmos has a relative instability depending on the various social strata in which it is active, as proof of its internal incoherence and disarticulation. In fact, Luckmann reminds us, traditional, customary religious themes are re-ordered in the orbit of the secular and the private, especially by the young and urban dwellers. Thus Durkheim's prediction of a wholly individual religion would seem to come true.

Robert N. Bellah and collaborators (1985; 1996) define the intensification of individualism by the term "Sheilaism", as a wholly personal religious form which can thus take the name of the person who embodies it (Sheila Larson). "I believe in God. I'm not a religious fanatic. I can't remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It's Sheilaism. Just my own little

voice" (Bellah 1985: 221). On the other hand, as Bellah makes clear, religious individualism may be present in "church religion" itself, but historic roots go back in time, in the exemplary case of Anne Hutchinson, to the eighteenth century. She "began to draw her own theological conclusions from her religious experiences and teach them to others, conclusions that differed from those of the established ministry" (Bellah 1985: 233). Still more typical is the religious individualism shown by Tim Eichelberger: "I feel religious in a way. I have no denomination or anything like this" (Bellah 1985: 233). For these subjects, as in invisible religion as hypothesized by Luckmann, one of the main objectives is "self–realization" (Bellah 1985, 233), and perhaps in Freud's terms the *Ich-Leistung*, the autonomy of the individual.

Bellah's "civil religion" (Bellah 1967) has not really been taken into consideration because of the ethnocentric perspective of the sociological reading of the "religious dimension" which is specifically applicable to United States society. It is a well-known fact that Bellah attaches major importance to a series of beliefs, symbols and rituals which have not removed the religious factor from politics. The contents of this kind of "civil religion" are furnished by the perception of a universal reality bearing religious characteristics which is reflected in a people's initiatives, especially those referring to biblical concepts: exodus, chosen people, new Jerusalem, sacrifice, etc... The religious element often acts as a unifying factor among individuals or groups otherwise in contrast. Religious identity can thus partly make up for the lack of a national identity. Seen from this dimension, "civil religion" was held to be the unifying element which made possible the birth and development of the United States of America.

The Berger and Luckmann (1966) lesson remains authoritative: the social construction of reality is the basis from which the value system branches out, a circuitry which directs social action and rests on an objectified and historicized world-view which is thus endowed with a religious character it is hard to lose. The ultimate meaning of life itself is clearly written therein and orientates attitudes and behaviours.

In Roberston's (1970) approach religion is a part of the process of globalization, based on relationship between individuals, mankind, national societies, and the systems of various societies. But it should be borne in mind that some religious organizations foster a nationalistic fundamentalism to protect their roots and to reshape the world order. Besides, Robertson rejects at the same time both the hypothesis of secularization and of desecularization. Therefore religion will play a central role in the construction and reconstruction of societal identities, because it is capable of enhancing closeness among different cultures, creating in such a way the basis for the globalization.

For Luhmann (1977) religion is a social system which regulates the relationships of people with the world in a comprehensive and ultimate meaning. But the "environment" is more complex than the system. And society is a social (external) system that aims to regulate the environment (internal). The system (and religion itself as system) is able to reduce the complexity of environment, that is external with respect to the system, which elaborates the answers to the complexity of system. This systemic differentiation presupposes that religion fulfils the function of transforming the indeterminate world, to reduce its complexity. At the end religion does not disappear but it isn't so central because it is just interpretative of reality, instead of being integrative in durkheimian terms.

However, it may now be more convenient to aim at disarticulating religious phenomenology from within, following a reading with more stratified dynamics and multiple faceting. In practice it is not clear there are only church religion and invisible religion *à la Luckmann* (1967). Rather, we may propose another hypothetical solution which envisages intermediate categories more or less close to the two extremes defined in terms of visibility and invisibility.

An initial post-Luckmann interpretation was articulated in 1983 and applied to the Italian situation (but not only) during the International Conference of Sociology of Religion (held at Bedford College, London): "beside the interests and pressures coming from ecclesiastical sources, are there any other premises or factors which can explain religious bearing on Italian politics? In particular, it is important to verify first of all how the institution fares under the pressure of an extended

"religious field" containing varied and attractive options, including anti-institutional purposes. Secondly, we must ask ourselves whether in practice religious influence in political choices concerns only Catholicism (or Christianity) or any religious expression in general. Thirdly, we must see whether the country's history or its national culture mark the existence of fixed elements, bearing common values leading (directly or indirectly, in specific or vague ways) to a widespread model of religious socialization (based prevalently on patters of Catholic reference)" (Cipriani 1984: 32).

Stark and Bainbridge (1980) have elaborated on "exchange theory" and on the idea of "compensation" as a promise for a future reward that could be accepted as a compensatory form to be exchanged for the established objective. Actually the persons accept religious compensators for rewards that do no exist in their life. This theory is not exactly what James S. Coleman (1990) defines as "rational choice". Stark, in particular, has a peculiar idea of religious market and therefore he carries out research on religious conflict, on the stability and dynamics of religious economies, and on the development of Christianity. The market pluralism does not lead to the end of religious confessions, because religions become stronger and competitive, especially if they give a convincing answer to individual expectations.

Some sociologists think that Warner's (1993) seminal article on new sociological paradigm for the study of religion is in line with rational choice theory. Warner doesn't agree. His main idea is that religion is an autonomous reality, and no more a dependent variable. According to this new paradigm of religion as independent variable, Stephen Warner prefers to study communities, subcultures, new religious institutions, and modern religious identities, instead of secularization process (and theories, to say the "old paradigm").

Another theorist against secularization myth is Casanova (1994), because religions still have a relevant public role in many countries: in Poland and in Spain, in Iran and in Latin America, in the United States. A lot of conflicts around the world are strictly connected with religious factors. And in any case a religious revival is evident in Western cultures, even though the level of secularization is getting higher than before. Therefore secularization and sacralization proceed together. But the first doesn't depend on modernization. And Casanova too doesn't accept suggestions coming from rational choice theory. Besides, he says that "religious institutions and organizations refuse to restrict themselves to the pastoral care of individual souls and continue to raise questions about the interconnections of private and public morality and to challenge the claims of subsystems, particularly states and markets, to be exempt from extraneous normative considerations. One of the results of this ongoing contestation is a dual, interrelated process of repoliticization of the private religious and moral spheres and renormativization of the public economic and political spheres" (Casanova 1994: 5-6). This is a sort of "deprivatization" of religion.

A third scholar who strongly disagrees with theorists of rational choice is Steve Bruce (1999). In particular he maintains that new religious movements aren't able to replace traditional religions, and that secularization paradigm is useful to understand the fact that today religion is like a wheel which turns more and more slowly (Bruce 2002: 176): religious socialization is in difficulties and liturgical practice is in a deep-seated crisis.

In Hervieu-Léger (2000) perspective the emotion has a key role. The new Christianity consists of "emotional communities", deriving from a strongly personalized choice that creates a direct bond between the community and each of its members. There is a quest for self-realization through a compromise between Christianity and modernity. Religion is a kind of "authorized collective memory" which plays a critical role vis-à-vis the institutions.

"Believing without belonging" is another successful theoretical expression that accompanies Grace Davie's (1990) suggestion: in a situation of religious individualism the religious experience tends to be separated from institution and religious practice. But in Nordic countries of Europe it seems that formula can be reversed: "belonging without believing". Another proposal comes from Davie (2006): a "vicarious religion" which means "the notion of religion performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number, *who implicitly at least not only understand, but quite clearly*

approve of what the minority is doing" (Davie 2007: 127). It is a key point to understand the situation of religious Europe: few Europeans attend weekly rites but many appreciate the presence of religious buildings in their countries. Davie (2007: 143) is convinced "that vicariousness still resonates in Europe in the early years of the twenty-first century and will do for the foreseeable future".

3. *Review of empirical evidence accumulated*
The "invisible religion" perceived by Thomas Luckmann, which is based on the assumption of a crisis of the institutional apparatus, seems to be applicable only in relation to certain aspects of modern societies, and does not completely destroy so-called church religion.

Today we must ask if we are faced with an absolute novelty or whether, rather, the Luckmann's "modern religious themes" are nothing more than the sedimentation of pre-existing, more or less subterranean channels, long incorporated in traditional religious modes, and surfacing now not for simply contingent reasons. The lack of research in this regard and the great weight of social control found in some particular historical and geographical contexts may be among these reasons.

An example is provided by the sociological trajectory of the Polish *Solidarnosc* movement. Its link to the Polish Catholic church was useful for a while. Then, once liberation from the communist system was attained, its influence began to wane, to the point of reducing to a glimmer. Meanwhile, other individualistic and familistic demands had been able to prevail, damaging the previous solidarity between the politico-trade union movement and religious membership. Today, religious practice, though still high in comparison with other European nations, is marking time, indeed retreating, in the face of the new modern demands of the rising generations unaware of the previous experience and, in addition, not averse to welcoming the westernising (and secularising) breezes of consumerism and the use of free time. But this occurred not only because of the passage from one age cohort to the next but also because of prior sources already functioning within the formal, compact facade of solidarity of the past. Thus even in a Poland sacralized to the utmost there were the forerunners of a future secularization *in nuce*. In fact, "opinion surveys showed a lessening of confidence in the church from 82% in 1990 to 57% in 1992, and a falling acceptance of its involvement in Polish political life" (Jasinska-Kania 1995: 451). To complete the argument one must, however, point out that this has not involved the total supersession of Catholic religious experience, but has rather favoured the regeneration of previously existing impulsions not wholly evident and visible (Erenc, Wszeborowski 1993; Gorlach, Sarega 1993). In short, in the practicing, believing Pole too there was concealed the individualist, familistic subject, wholly inclined towards self-realization and -expression.

Again, we see the ambiguous, ambivalent character of secularization. It seems to erode the religious institution, but really only assists the principal factors of a very complex acceptance, made up of consensus on values and dissent in fact, of facile decision and conflicting choices. The new mode of belief supplants the church-religion model but re-adapts it to new behavioural spheres which proclaim individual autonomy and independence. This seems not so much different from the Oevermann's (1995) "structural model of religiosity".

After the wave of secularization and the more recent development defined as "religious revival", social scientists studying the religious phenomenon are becoming far more cautious about the use of certain data, which even today give importance to either the secularization or the revival hypothesis. It has already become apparent that in both cases this process is probably due to a tendency towards the "sociological construction of inconsistency" by means of purely theoretical reasoning, or of a marked use of figures and results which are put together in scientifically feeble ways.

If we then examine other hypotheses which on the international level, in the field of sociology of religion, are frequently under discussion, we can see that they are not totally applicable in many cases. In fact, any effort to verify these hypotheses has generally failed.

Inglehart (1997) attempts to test modernization theory through the World Value Survey have been criticized, mostly for methodological reasons. However it remains a unique comparative study

based on panel methodology and concerning not only European countries. Thanks to comparative research, more recently Norris and Inglehart (2004) have verified that advanced industrial societies are more secularized than before, but other countries are growing with people linked to traditional religious world views. Modernization increases with security, but diversity of nations is at the origin of different behaviours linked to value systems of Christians, Muslims, Confucians. The economic trend remains the same in various regions of the world but cultural heritage influences the output.

Now new religious communities and religious organisations are settling in different parts of continents, sometimes very far from their original habitats. Christianity (Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism) is the most widespread religion together with Islam. Religions are well diffused around the world, but there are substantial differences in belief, behaviour and practice, and there are various branches of each religion, with some specificity in religious movements. In general religions are supported by national culture, and are peculiar of a region, but many influences can be found all over the countries. In any case the impact of the religious presence is evident everywhere.

4. *Assessment of state of art*

250 years have passed since David Hume published in 1757 *Four Dissertations: The natural history of Religion, of the Passion, of Tragedy, of the Standard of the Taste* followed by *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, in 1779: thanks to the English empiricist – whose books were enlisted by the Catholic Church in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* – the first systematic attempt of a religious study starting from human experience instead of a metaphysical perspective.

Sociology started with A. Comte, approximately one Century later. However, the studies of Hume were to anticipate the principles of a scientific approach to religious phenomenon. This approach was continued by Durkheim and Weber, further developed by Le Bras and Bellah, up to now when sociology of religion is experiencing a particularly good period, even if great theories and masters are lacking (such as Parsons and Luhmann), and others (like Berger and Luckmann) are less present.

Certainly, the number of good quality researchers has increased, notwithstanding the absence of absolute excellence normally recognised by the majority of the scientific community. In the meantime, there are a good number of field researches, illustrating interests ranging from the more traditional sector of Christian religious experience to that of new religions, with a particular increase in Islamic studies (Ghazal Read 2007) and in the generally neglected Asiatic realities.

A backward situation is noted, however, on the state of the studies concerning religious diversity in Africa. We should always be grateful to Bennetta Jules Rosette (1979).

A new and significant contribution now comes from central and south America, where new initiatives combining events between various sociologists of religion, such as conferences and journals are held: following the footsteps of the Brazilian Reginaldo Prandi (2005), the Argentinean Alejandro Frigerio (1994) is now playing a major role, along with Ari Pedro Oro (1999), who is also from Brazil.

In the last few years, however, some significant scholars have passed away, such as Niklas Luhmann (1977) in Germany, Silvano Burgalassi (1970) in Italy, Bryan Wilson (1961) in Great Britain, Srđan Vrcan (2001) in Croazia, Yves Lambert (2007), and Jean Séguy (1977) in France.

New fellows, however, are emerging and seem to be of good quality, especially in the field of Orthodox churches, thanks to Victor Roudometof and Alexander Agadjanian, together with Jerry Pankhurst (Roudometof, Agadjanian, Pankhurst 2005), with contributions by – among others – Gavril Flora , Vasilios N. Makrides and Kathy Rousselet.

Another good job is being carried out by Fenggang Yang (Yang, Tamney 2005), who is not only fostering research on Chinese religiosity (Yang, Tamney 2006), but is also promoting initiatives in order to create links among Chinese sociologist of religions. In fact, the first International Symposium of Chinese Sociology of Religion was held in Beijing on July, 10-12 in 2004

(historically relevant date to remember). The ideological influence is still strong; however, scientific quality is of a good level and is bound to get better.

Another important development in sociology of religion is that of post-communist countries. The most dedicated researchers are: the Croatian Siniša Zrinščak (2006), the Polish sociologist Irena Borowik (2001), the German Detlef Pollack (2003, 2007), the Byelorussian Larissa Titarenko (2004), the Bulgarian Nonka Bogomilova (2005), just to make some names.

Within European boundaries, the work of Grace Davie (2000, 2002) is highly considered. Grace Davie (2007) also summarizes the state of the art of the discipline. Jean-Paul Willaime (2004) also studies the subject of religion in Europe.

The lay discourse is developed within the European context by Jean Baubérot (2004). Instead, in central and south America it is developed by Roberto Blancarte (2000).

Among the new subjects in the socio-religious area, we have to highlight the pioneering work of Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead (2005), as well as Giuseppe Giordan (2007) who is working on vocation, and on conversion.

James Beckford (2003) has written about socio-religious institutional issues, and is currently carrying out a number of researches on religious presence within prisons (Beckford 1998).

Among new talents, the Swiss Jörg Stoltz (2007, 2008) from University of Lausanne is particularly versed in theoretical issues, while the French Erwan Dianteill (2006) is the author of outstanding field research.

A new perspective is outlined by the quantitative inquiry by Milena Vilaça (2006) in Portugal.

Attention should be given to the book which collect the most important essays by Robert N. Bellah (2002) on religion and the one by Inger Furseth and Pål Repstad (2006).

A special mention should be made of the young Finnish sociologist Tuomas Martikainen (2004), who is specialized on religious diasporas and inter-religious relationships.

In conclusion, websites and centres of sociology of religion are becoming more and more frequent. The following is just a brief list: *Center for Middle Eastern Studies* (Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts): http://cmes.hmdc.harvard.edu; *Center for the Study of Religion* (directed by Robert Wuthnow, Princeton University): http://www.princeton.edu/~csrelig; *Center for the Study of Religion* (University of California at Los Angeles, Humanities Division): http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/religion/main.html; *Center for the Study of Religion and Society* (University of Notre Dame, USA): http://csrs.nd.edu/religionlinks.shtml; *Centre interdisciplinaire d'étude des religions et de la laïcité (CIERL)* (Université Libre de Bruxelles): http://www.ulb.ac.be/philo/cierl; *Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni (CESNUR)* (directed by Massimo Introvigne, in Turin): http://www.cesnur.org; *Faculty of Religious Studies* (University of Leiden, The Netherlands): http://www.religion.leiden.edu; *Groupe Sociétés, Religions, Laïcités* (CNRS, Paris): http://www.gsrl.cnrs.fr/head.htm; *Hartford Institute for Religion Research* (Hartford, USA): http://www.hartfordinstitute.org; *Harvard Divinity School*, *Center for the Study of World Religions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts): http://www.hds.harvard.edu/cswr/grants/index.html; *Institut d'Études de l'Islam et des Sociétés du Monde Musulman* (directed by Jean-Philippe Bras, École de Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris): http://www.ehess.fr/centres/institut; *Institut de Recherches et d'Études sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman (IREMAM)* (University of Aix-en-Provence): http://www.mmsh.univ-aix.fr/iremam/HTML/FRAMSET/HP/HPH.html; *Institut européen en sciences des religions (IESR)* (directed by Jean-Paul Willaime, in Paris): http://www.iesr.ephe.sorbonne.fr; *Nanzan Institute for Religion & Culture* (Nanzan University, Japan): http.//www.ic.nanzan-u.ac.jp/SHUBUNKEN/welcome_main_frame.htm; *Politique, Religion, Institutions et Sociétés: Mutations Européennes (PRISME)* (University of Strasbourg, France): http://prisme.u-strasb.fr/site10.

Furthermore, the number of registrations and the percentage of attending interested scholars at the conferences organized by the International Society for Sociology of Religion (http://soc.kuleuven.be/ceso/sisr) and by the Association of Sociology of Religion (http://www.sociologyofreligion.com), and Research Committee for Sociology of Religion

5. *Future direction theorizing and research should/might take*

Sociology of religion seems to be in good standing at the beginning of new millennium. But a comparative approach is necessary more and more, namely regarding European and American context, just to begin. Generally speaking, at the moment, for instance, European and North American publications of sociology of religion seem to ignore the scientific production in other continents. And Asian, African, and Australian contribution is not known as it would deserve. Linguistic barrier is still an obstacle. But now new solutions can be found. And *Internet* can help very much. In particular in Central and South America as well as in Africa, in Asia, and in Oceania new trends are in progress. A stronger effort must be done for a better reciprocal knowledge at international level in order to diffuse theories and empirical results that remain unknown just because of lack of translation, and of communication.

From a theoretical point of view, sociologists of religion are not ready to afford new situations created by migration processes. And methodological and technical tools of analysis still lack of an accurate profile, reliable in new and different situations.

More than in the past, sociological approach to religion needs qualitative empirical studies. The nature of religion and religiosity escape from traditional questionnaires. Sociologists of religion should concentrate on detailed interviews of individuals coming from different backgrounds, on the supposition that freedom of expression, without any kind of restriction and with no pre-coded responses, can give way to a higher level of spontaneity in the answers and as consequence a deeper knowledge of crucial religious issues. This solution will favour a more complex interpretation of data.

6. *Annotated references and suggested reading*

a) Classical works

COMTE, A., *Catéchisme positiviste ou sommaire exposition de la religion universelle, en onze entretiens systématiques entre une Femme et un Prêtre de l'Humanité*, chez l'Auteur et chez Carilian-Goeury et V. Dalmont, Paris, 1852. Comte introduces to the contents of the "universal religion".

DURKHEIM, E., *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse. Le système totémique en Australie*, Paris, Alcan, 1912; *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Free Press, New York, 1955. According to Durkheim the solidarity is the basis of religious life in Arunta tribes. The purpose of the book is to study primitive religion, because it is the simplest religion known.

ELIADE, M., *Le mythe de l'éternel retour*, Gallimard, Paris, 1949; *Myth of the Eternal Retour: Or Cosmos and History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1991. Eliade's intention is of accurately analyzing collective rituals performed at irregular intervals that entailed the construction of a cult house and the solemn recitation of original myths concerning the cosmogonic structure.

EVANS-PRITCHARD, E. E., *Nuer Religion*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1956. Evans-Pritchard attempts to assimilate the religion of the Nuer (a Nilotic population) to Judaism, because of its monotheistic character.

EVANS-PRITCHARD, E. E., *Theories of Primitive Religion*, Oxford University Press, London, 1965. The author proposes a "relational" theory by which religion must be studied and understood through its effects, in relation with other aspects of life and culture.

HERBERG, W., *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, Doubleday, Garden City, N. Y., 1955. Herberg is a kind of one-book author. He is well known for this publication which presents main characteristics of US people and their way of life.

HORKHEIMER, M., *Die Sehnsucht nach dem ganz Anderen. Ein Interview mit Kommentar von Helmut Gumnior*, Furche-Verlag H. Rennebach KG, Hamburg, 1970. Horkheimer shows interest in Judaism and Christianity and talks explicitly of a "nostalgia for the totally Other".

JAMES, W., *The Varieties of Religious Experience. A Study in Human Nature*, Longmans, New York, 1902; Collier Macmillan, New York, 1961. James strongly prefers the analysis of personal religion. He stresses the fundamental distinction between "institutional religion" and "personal religion".

LE BRAS, G., *Études de sociologie religieuse*, P.U.F., Paris, 1955-6, 2 vols. Le Bras is attached to a positivistic approach to religion in order to offer empirical behavioural evidence to ecclesiastical pastoral practice. But he also establishes precise norms and methodological instructions aiming at a neutral research.

LÉVY-BRUHL, L., *Le surnaturel et la nature dans la mentalité primitive*, Alcan, Paris, 1931. The author emphasizes the mistic, prelogical, and intuitive character of primitive thought.

MALINOWSKI, B., *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, Free Press, Glencoe, 1948. This posthumous anthology is a comprehensive insight into socioreligious matters, and it includes studies on the spirit of the dead in the Trobriand Islands and on myth.

MAUSS, M., "Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie", *L'Année Sociologique*, 1902-3, 7, pp. 1-146. The relationship between magic and religion is a crucial issue in Mauss. It is a controversial and difficult subject to deal with.

MAUSS, M., *Essai sur le don*, «L'Année Sociologique», 1925; *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, Norton, New York, 1990. This essay presents data on Melanesian, Polynesian, and North American cultures. The gift symbolizes the establishment of a relationship and represents a social value beyond its exchange value.

NIEBHUR, H. R., *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, The World Publishing Company, New York, 1972. It is a theological text but it deals with socioreligious dynamics and with authors like Weber and Troeltsch.

OTTO, R., *Das Heilige. Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationale*, Breslau, 1917; *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1958. It is considered a masterpiece. Otto's conviction is that religion derives from the confluence of rational and irrational forces. The sacred is an isolated, separate, mysterious, and fascinating category.

SIMMEL, G., "Die Religion", in *Die Gesellschaft, Sammlung sozialpsychologischer Monographien*, edited by M. BUBER, vol. II, Rütten und Loening, Frankfurt a. M., 1906, 1912, II ed.; in *Gesammelte Schriften zur Religionssoziologie*, edited by H. J. HELLE, Duncker & Humblot, Berlin, 1989, pp. 110-71; *Essays on Religion*, edited by H. J. HELLE, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1997. Simmel differentiates religiosity from religion. He defines religiosity as the inner form of human experience, which precedes religion, to say the empirical transposition of religiosity, through its implementation at organizational level, as church, sect, denomination.

TOCQUEVILLE, A., *De la démocratie en Amérique*, Paris, 1835 (vol. I), 1840 (vol. II); *Democracy in America*, Vintage, New York, 1956. Tocqueville thinks that religion has a great influence on politics. Actually American democracy has a religious basis.

TROELTSCH, E., *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*, Mohr, Tübingen, 1912; *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, Macmillan, New York, 1931. Troeltsch speaks of church an sect. The behaviour of individual members is controlled by the sect in a more rigid way.

TYLOR, E. B., *Primitive Culture*, Murray, London, 2 vols., 1871. Tylor maintains that religion originates with animism. All nature is considered to possess an independent life and is full of "spiritual beings".

van der LEEUW, G., *Phänomenologie der Religion*, Mohr, Tübingen, 1933; *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology*, Priceton University Press, Princeton, 2 vols., 1986. Author's methodology contains the lived experience, the understanding of religious phenomenon, the evidence. The exceptionality of the power connected to the religious experience is stressed.

van GENNEP, A., *Les rites de passage*, E. Nourry, Paris, 1909; *The Rites of Passage*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1961. The author is critical of Durkheim's theory of totemism.

WEBER, M., *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, "Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik", 20-1, 1904-5; "Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus", in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Mohr, Tübingen, 1920-1, 3 vols.; 1922-3; *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Scribner, New York. This essay is perhaps the most famous in the field of sociology of religion. Weber maintains that the origin of capitalism is in Protestant approach to moral behaviour.

WEBER, M., *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Mohr, Tübingen, 1920-1, 3 vols.; 1922-3; *The Sociology of Religion*, Beacon, Boston, 1963. Many issues are present in this publication: theodicy, salvation, asceticism, mysticism, prophetism.

b) Contemporary works

AMMERMAN, N. T., *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and Their Partners*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2005.

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8. *Key words*
belief, church, magic, myth, practice, profane, religious movements, rite, sacred, sect, secularization, symbols

French abstract
Cet article présente les principales approches théoriques au phénomène religieux: le fonctionnalisme, le constructivisme, la religion civile, la religion invisible, la religion diffusée, l'économie religieuse, la religion vicaire, etc. On constate que les résultats empiriques sont très difficiles à cumuler et considérer fiables. La situation de la sociologie de la religion en général est plutôt prometteuse à cause de la présence de nouvelles générations de sociologues très motivès. Pour le futur on signale la nécessité d'une théorisation sur la mobilité des émigrants. Une autre nécessité concerne le développement de l'analyse qualitative pour mieux connaître les dynamiques religieuses.

Spanish abstract