Communities of faith: Sectarianism, identity, and social change on a Danish island

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DESCRIPTION

Most studies of modern religious change have viewed it as a process of secularization in which the advance of science and technology discredits religious beliefs and destroys religious institutions. Yet religion has stubbornly failed to expire in the West, and in some places is undergoing a resurgence. This book reconsiders secularization theory through a case study of a rural island in Denmark where, in the late nineteenth century, a series of powerful religious awakenings electrified its population, dividing it into several large and intense Lutheran movements. After examining the history and social structure of those Protestant groups and revealing their cultural and ideological complexity, the author concludes that the secularization theory is inadequate and that an anthropological approach, focusing on religion's role in creating identity and community for its members, offers much better insight into religious processes.

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Introduction: Secularization and its Discontents
This book explained the changing identity among American Muslims as they struggle to keep true to their faith while deciding to what degree they will integrate into American society. From 2001-2002, Ms. Abdo was a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University. Simply put, the rise of the new sectarianism within the Arab world has greatly complicated the diplomatic and geo-political challenges facing the United States by demanding that serious consideration be given to religious difference in its own right, and not simply as an epiphenomenon stemming from social, eco-nomic, or political contestation. “People return to their primary identities. And the more religiosity in a society, the more the state is weak.” 6.5 Wright, Robin, and Peter Baker, “Iraq, Jordan See Threat to Election from Iran.” Sectarian violence in the Arab and Muslim worlds is exacerbated by the role foreign powers play in the region, as well as local power rivalries. By Ussama Makdisi. Sunni and Shia participants at a World Economic Forum meeting on the Middle East at the King Hussein Convention Centre at the Dead Sea, Jordan, May 20, 2017. Yet the strong association of the pejorative term “sectarianism” with the Middle East repeatedly suggests that the region is more negatively religious than the “secular” West. This is an ideological assumption woven into how the Arab and Muslim worlds are generally depicted as having fundamentally religious landscapes in contrast to Western societies. Sectarianism has gone beyond religious elements, and is actually fueled by identity politics. A united identity in Lebanon is needed to ensure continuing stability. These changing demographics have not been properly addressed in Lebanon, as it retains its constitution in present-day, fuelling sectarianism. Salibi’s contribution shows how Christians, for example, were frightened of pointing out this change in demographics, as it could jeopardise their legitimacy in ruling the state (2002: 197-198). Some researchers would argue that this is due to the “primordial” nature of identity and ethnicity which is deeply rooted historically in society (Esman: 1994), whereas others argue that ethnicity-powered sectarianism is a more modern element (Brass: 1991).