

## Question 1 (Durkheim - Davidman)

In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim (1995) focused on defining religion, which is centered around his binary idea of the sacred and the profane. In essence, the sacred is what evokes the feeling of transcending the material world, while the profane is what comprises that material world (pp. 34-35). The unsynagogued Jews, who Davidman (2007) interviewed in “The New Voluntarism and the Case of Unsynagogued Jews,” did not practice their beliefs in a traditional way. They tailored the rituals to better accommodate their life, which might look like serving pizza instead of traditional food for Shabbat (p. 58). While their rituals appear more secular, involving everyday items like pizza, their practice still remains sacred. This is because such practices symbolize the beliefs and values of the Jews, give purpose and meaning to them, and therefore, unite them with something greater than themselves.

Durkheim (1995) believed that religion is a social thing (p. 9). Although the unsynagogued Jews do not congregate in synagogues, they practice their beliefs at home in unique ways. This aligns with what Davidman (2007) noted: some of the central practices of Jews occur in homes (p. 58). Even though a family is not as big as a religious congregation, it is definitely a group that shares the same rituals (Davidman 2007: 41). It is still a social practice. In addition, the unsynagogued Jews Davidman interviewed maintained some connection with the synagogue. For example, one of the interviewees partly sought legitimacy of her practice, hiking in the mountains for Rosh Hashanah, from the rabbi’s blessing. Durkheim argued that rituals require consecrated people who can say certain words and perform certain actions (p. 35). To that unsynagogued Jew, it was the rabbi and his blessing. Despite their untraditional ways, the practices of unsynagogued Jews are social, as they engage with their families and also the consecrated people of the synagogue.

Durkheim (1995) argued that society is essentially god. He explained that humans constructed religion to explain the force that subjects them to go against their natural instincts when in actuality, the source of such moral influence is society (pp. 209-211). This idea can be applied to understand the ascribed identity of Jews. As Davidman (2007) noted, the unsynagogued Jews believe that once someone is a Jew, they are forever a Jew (p. 61). The sense of obligation to identify as a Jew can be understood as social pressure. For instance, one of the interviewees described Judaism as the ideas that people sacrificed for during the Holocaust and hence believed that it is her duty to identify with them (Davidman 2007: 64). The collective history of the Jews forms the basis of why many Jews believe that their Jewish identity is immutable and demonstrates the moral influence that Durkheim attributed to society.

Collective effervescence is characterized by Durkheim (1995) as heightened emotions that spread among individuals when they come together as a group (p. 217). The individuals embody the group’s beliefs and reach a moral harmony with their neighbors (Durkheim 1995: 213). To the Jews, the collective effervescence is provoked when the subject of Holocaust is brought to

the surface. The collective memory of Holocaust is so strong that even the thought of it brings intense emotions to the Jews. It is so crucial that the unsynagogued Jews gain their sense of Jewishness around others who do not share the history of Holocaust (Davidman 2007: 63). As collective effervescence promotes the unity of believers of religion, the collective emotions aroused by Holocaust is important for the solidarity among the Jews.

## Question 2 (Weber - Moss and Baden)

Weber (1946) believed that religion is influenced by various spheres of values, especially the economic and the political, which are governed by their own rules (p. 328). The interaction between religion and the economic sphere is evident in the case of the Green family, the owner of Hobby Lobby and described as a religious enterprise by Moss and Baden (2017) in *Bible Nation: The United States of Hobby Lobby* (p. 2). As Weber (1946) explains in “Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions,” however, tension is inevitable between religion and the economic sphere. It stems from how, due to its impersonal nature, rational economy leaves no place for the religious ethic of brotherliness (p. 331). To resolve this tension in a reasonable manner, Weber pointed to the Protestant ethic, elaborated in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber (1997) explained that the Protestant ethic emphasizes rational labor in a calling (p. 125). It demands one to cultivate the talent given to him by God, accept his gift in the form of monetary success, and use it for him when he requires it (p. 125-126). This perspective characterizes the narration of David Green’s story. Growing up, David Green struggled to find his calling (Moss and Baden 2017: 3). When he found it and established Hobby Lobby, he stayed true to his religious beliefs by funding public printing of images of biblical stories (pp. 5-6). He believed that his company’s success was purely thanks to God’s supervision as he believed was demonstrated by the time when the company’s profit fell because they did not close all stores on Sundays (p. 5). He also gave back a significant portion of their profit to charity, with most of the recipients committed to the work of spreading religious beliefs by, for example, creating a free bible app (pp. 6-7). In this way, the Green family fulfilled the prosperity gospel, which was their solution to the tension with the economic sphere.

In *Economy and Society*, Weber (1968) argued that political authority begins with charismatic authority, which can be used to describe David Green (pp. 295-297). In *The Social Psychology of the World Religions*, Weber (1948) defines charisma as an extraordinary quality that gives one the power to rule over men (p. 296). David Green led with business acumen, piety, and patriotism, to which his family and workers were gravitated towards (Moss and Baden 2017: 2). The Green family was also actively involved with the political sphere. In line with Weber’s description of religion’s interaction with the political sphere, the Green family’s political involvement was driven by their religious beliefs (Weber 1946: 336-338). For instance, the Green family won a prominent lawsuit that freed them from the obligation to provide abortion-inducing drugs to their employees and sought to reform public education (Moss and Baden 2017: 8, 19). The Green family was sometimes in cooperation with the political sphere. David Green endorsed a candidate for the GOP presidential nomination (p. 10). While the Green family have been in both conflict and cooperation with the political sphere, behind their actions were always their religious beliefs put forward by the charismatic authority figure, David Green.

## Question 3 (Geertz - Zuckerman)

In “Religion as a Cultural System,” Geertz (1965) explained that the model of reality reflects the physical relationships of reality, while the model for reality produces reality (p. 207). Both give rise to reality by being shaped by it and shaping it. In “To be Mormon, or Not to be,” Zuckerman (2012) described two ex-Mormons—Cecilia and Andrew. Cecilia described her struggle with temple garments, which all adult Mormons are expected to wear at all times (p. 59). Her reality was shaped by her religious beliefs. One day, unable to handle the heat, Cecilia decided to take them off, which reflects how reality also shapes religion. While religion can impose rules on one’s everyday life, those rules are ultimately confined by the limitations of reality.

Geertz (1965) described the psychological role of religion, which is to evoke moods and motivations (p. 208). Moods are temporary and vary by intensity, while motivations last longer and endow individuals with a sense of direction. If moods prioritize the conditions in which it arose, motivations are made complete by achieving the ends it conceived (Geertz 1965: 209). Both conditions manifested in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints’ involvement with the movement for Proposition 8. According to Cecilia, the Church galvanized people to take actions, such as displaying an anti-gay marriage sign, sought donations incessantly, and was mean-spirited and fixated on preaching about Proposition 8 with vigor (Zuckerman 2012: 61-62). The Church effectively kindled moods of anger and hostility by preaching about the immorality of gay marriage. It also gave directions about how to advocate for Proposition 8, such as by making donations, which were made long-lasting by having a concrete goal.

In Geertz’s (1965) words, religion dons an aura of factuality, which refers to the sense of really real (p. 213). The religious perspective is deemed so true that it transcends truth in a secular sense and the thought of doubting the veracity of religious beliefs feels out of the question. This explains why Cecilia and Andrew did not criticize Mormon beliefs, despite how the irrational teachings of Mormonism are what often baffled the non-Mormons (Zuckerman 2012: 69). Andrew explained that while the rational part of him questions religious beliefs, his overall attitude was that the stories of Joseph Smith could be factual. Geertz argued that it is this aura of factuality that establishes the persuasive authority behind religious actions (p. 213). Because they believed, the religious teachings seemed factual and exerted a force on them to follow the model for reality (Geertz 1965: 212). When they stopped believing, religion lost its influence, as demonstrated by how Cecilia took her temple garments off when she stopped believing.

Geertz (1965) believed that religion affirms a general order of existence, which helps individuals make sense of their experiences and their world (p. 211). Without it, individuals feel baffled, lost, and suffer (Geertz 1965: 210). Andrew described what general order of existence Mormonism established for him: being happily married with many children (Zuckerman 2012: 68). When Mormonism failed to explain his attraction to men and his erotic desires, he forwent his

membership in the Church (Zuckerman 2012: 65-66). When Cecilia lost her virginity before marriage, she suffered from the thought of violating her religious beliefs and eventually renounced her religion when Mormonism's order of existence did not align with her perspective on certain events like Proposition 8. Both Andrew and Cecilia's stories underscore the crucial role of the general order of existence in providing coherence, illustrating how its inadequacy can lead to departure from their faith.