

Some Methodological Problems in Religion and Social Stratification Relationship Researches in Different Context

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SUMMARY Subject matter of this paper is the analysis of empirical researches of the relationship between religion and social stratification in different societies and cultures, based upon empirical indicators with the purpose of identifying methodological difficulties the researchers face with. This is a problem of particular importance because within the sociology of religion, relationship between religion and social stratification is one of the most interesting and the most complex ones, and because resolving it would make possible comparative researches, which presently do not exist, to be carried out.

The author emphasizes that the study of relation between religion and social stratification, i.e. the class (or the caste system) society represents only one segment or aspect of religion phenomenon which limits the space of religion as relatively autonomous phenomenon, because religion only partly leans upon the reality of social stratification. However, the attempt of analysing this relation in this work has been made in the first place in order to point out the entirety of complex and problematic relation between religion and social stratification. In this attempt an attention was directed to researches of relation between social stratification and religion in the USA, Western Europe and India, in societies having particular characteristics of social stratification, cultural and religious life.

The author endeavours to ascertain the similarities and differences between religions, namely the churches and temples in those areas. Pointing out the problems of theoretical-methodological approaches existing until present, and in particular their operationalisation in empirical researches (such as empirical indicators of social structure, religion and religiosity), the author noted in her work the difficulties the researchers come across in their attempt to find out those characteristics which are common and those which are different in religions of different parts of the world. In conclusion the author epitomizes these findings.

Key words: methodology, religion, social stratification, sociology of religion

Received on: 10th December 1998

Accepted on: 21st May 1999

1. Introduction

The relationship between religion and social stratification is one of *the most interesting* topics in the field of sociology of religion. It is also one of the *most complex* tasks the discipline faces with. The problem touches upon the most fundamental issues of social structure and raises many basic, intricate and difficult questions relating to the social structure (Weber, 1986). Owing to these difficulties, researches into this field at an empirical level have been inadequate, and do not provide sufficient basis for generalisation. Theories and approaches that have been devised from time to time to study these problems, lack coherence and uniformity. Moreover, these theories are rarely tested in the empirical field so as to obtain knowledge on their workability or usefulness to study the subject properly. Thus, taken as a whole, *there is no serious scientific basis or framework within which the study can be based*. Researchers into this field do not have the support of previously completed research or data to begin their work from. They almost always build their own hypotheses and make fresh beginnings to study the matter in their own ways. This exercise proves tedious and time-consuming.

There are many problems the researchers face with both at theoretical and methodological levels. At a theoretical level, there is *a wide variety of theories* existing in the field, with little coherence and consistency. For example, there are theories of the class system, or of social status groups or stratum. It is difficult to put all of them into a single conceptual order. Besides, a majority of these theories exist at a highly abstract level and are conceived in the form of hypotheses. These hypotheses are seldom tested. Also many theories embrace a particular field of investigation thereby reducing the scope for generalisation. They are far from a single, useful, coherent theoretical framework within which this problem can be scientifically dealt with in contemporary sociology.

The problem at methodological level relates to the problem of *operationalisation*. Even if a theory bears sufficient relevance so as to merit the empirical research, this task is made impossible by the difficulty involved in translating the theory into valid, uniform, operational aspects which would be tested within the reality of the social field of research. Different indicators are used by different sociologists, leading to widely divergent versions of social stratification (Goja, 1980). Consequently, there is total lack of consensus in scientific research in this field, the methodology suffers from incoherence, and it is not unified or synchronized enough to permit serious research.

The outcome of all these constraints is that sociologists studying the linkages between religion and social stratification are compelled to limit themselves to the level of researching certain trends and tendencies, not beyond. A strict and rigorous comparative study of this problem is theoretically almost *impossible* to undertake. In this paper, I too confine myself to studying and analysing the trends and to generalising from them to the extent that is permissible under the circumstances.

The relationship between religion and social stratification, as a part of the broader sociological process, always has a specific social and political context. It is necessary to follow and account for this context, while analysing the relationship in a particular society. Thus different approaches are required to study societies which exhibit widely divergent characteristics. Since no two societies are alike in all respects, their inherent specificities need to be carefully noted while dealing with different societies to research linkages between religion and social stratification.

The main concern of a researcher into this field is *the social function of religion in different social structures*. Religion can have a number of functions such as psychological, anthropological or philosophical, but these are not of immediate relevance to the purpose of the present study. The functional meaning and impact of religion for social groups, not private individuals, is what constitutes the focus of this research. Within this general boundary, the issues that are studied are inter-linked in so far as they all purport to discover and explain the nature of the interaction between religion and social existence. Thus the important questions here are, whether religion is an agent of social change, or a factor helping to maintain the status quo; whether it contributes to social integration or to social disintegration; and to what extent it affects social consciousness and in what manner. The relationship between religion and the state, the ruling class or the ruling ideological system is of crucial significance. The political connotation of religion in different societies, the way the different segments of the members of society look at religion and religiosity, and the relationship between these views and the existing state system or the dominant ideology are all important issues constituting the focus of this study. Such a study is necessary since it would help in demystifying a large field of day-to-day reality and lead to a better understanding of the complex processes going on within that reality. It will also lead to an understanding of the future in a more objective way in the form of valid generalisations and useful predictions for the future. On the whole, it will make human knowledge richer in a field where it has been, and still, continues to be steeped in confusion and abstraction.

Since the task of a serious comparative empirical research is made virtually impossible due to the difficulties mentioned earlier, the paper will be limited to dealing with only major trends in this field. These trends are derived from empirical insight into the relationship as such in societies of the U.S.A., Western Europe and India, which are treated separately. What is representative trend about the social stratification and religion in these societies will be discussed.

To begin with, concepts and indicators used in this study need to be mentioned. Three indicators are used to measure social stratification, namely (1) level of education, (2) income or economic position, and (3) profession. They point to the social status of a collectivity. Similarly, religious pursuit, or religiosity is measured by two indicators: (a) membership of a Church, and (b) frequency of attendance at a Church by a group. However, it is to be clearly noted that these two indicators are not enough to measure religiosity or what can be termed as religious par-

ticipation. Religiosity is an extremely complex thing to measure in this entirety and no authoritative pronouncement can be made as to what constitutes it.

Thus, this study, in view of the numerous constraints involved, does not claim to actually investigate or generalise about religion and social stratification, but what it attempts is *to highlight the trends in the field of the religious participation of different social groups* or the relationship between social stratification and religion (Church).

2. Religion and Social Stratification: U.S.A.

In the U.S.A., the trends of secularisation are fairly high, almost similar as in Western Europe, but not visible to a comparable extent. Different segments of the population exhibit different levels of religious participation. The upper classes of society reveal greater religiosity, in terms of attitude towards the Church and attendance at Church. The lower sections, the working class and the peasantry are less religious in that sense (Glock and Stark, 1965; Rosten, 1963: 247; Lazerwitz, 1966: 431; Vernon, 1962; Baird, 1970; Schneider, 1969; Chaves, 1989). This trend is more or less true of Western Europe, but the important difference is that, unlike in Western Europe they are not so observable or manifest in the U.S.A. Besides, in the United States the whole of society remained religious despite the degree of secularisation. All the sections indulge in religious pursuits, despite having different outlooks and attitudes towards religion.

The reason why secularisation is not so much visible and religiosity uniformly high among all sections of people in the U.S.A., compared to equally industrialised societies of Western Europe, is found in the role of the Church in this country (Finke & Stark, 1992). Religion, in the U.S.A., is a medium of social identification, social integration and social adaptation. The Church had changed its role in keeping with the growing influx of people from outside, and adopted for itself an increasingly secular role to suit all sections of the composite character of the society. Its secular functions have, indeed, outreached its religious character. It had helped an immigrant population to adapt itself to the mainstream of the new environment, it even helped them in finding suitable placements and picking professions of their own liking. It had dealt with the actual, day-to-day problems of the people with a view to mitigate the strains of adaptation (Whyte, 1967: 512). In American society, religious values are made almost *identical* with social values. The secular values nurtured by the Church are incorporated into the American value system, and the unity of religious and social values has helped in making American people close to the institution of Church, since they feel no inconvenience in identifying with the value system associated with the Church.

The linkage between religious values and the social values and the related problem of why the lower sections of people do not attend the Church as regularly as the rich despite the fact that the society as a whole remains more religious than

the Western Europe, needs some explanation. This situation presently prevailing in the U.S.A. has evolved in course of Christianity. In the beginning, Christianity supported the interests of the poor people, and "corrected social inequality" through theology (Berger, 1967; Kautsky, 1954). For example, it sought to neutralize social inequality by holding out that although if the rich are leading a life of luxury, they are destined to go to Hell, and if the poor are living a life of misery, they are set to go to Paradise. Such an attitude helped the poor in reconciling himself with his present lot. But through the years this attitude of the Church changed; in keeping with the changes in the social structure. The Church favored the richer sections by evolving a value system closely based upon its own religious attitudes. Now the poor is not viewed as one who is destined for Paradise, but poverty and misery of a person are viewed as due to the person's lack of effort. The person is poor because he did not work hard to better his conditions; so he is to remain within misery; and has nobody but himself to blame for that. The rich person's success is the result of his own effort, determination and ability. This attitude of the Church was in keeping with the Protestant Ethic's exclusive emphasis on hard work (Weber, 1989; 1976). Thus the Church floated a new religious value system which became the dominant American social value and which confirmed to the social reality. This value seemed to have justified the social position of the rich and held out bleak prospects for the poor. So the poor felt no consolation within it and despite the fact that he did not openly and actively campaigned against the Church like most of the working class in Western Europe, he was alienated from the Church, mainly in terms of attendance.

Another support for uniform religiosity of the American people is provided by the existence of a *plurality of religious sects* consisting of small groups of people, with which the members identify at a rather intimate level. These sects are numerous, each attracting a number of people, and thereby reducing their dependence on the Church. The well-organised sects cater to the different sections of the composite population, satisfying their religious and social needs (Russell, 1955; Glock, 1958; Bartz, 1984). All the sects taken together satisfy all sections of people, and prevent the growth of disaffection towards the Church by particular section, which would otherwise crop up if the Church itself had to satisfy all sections of the people - a virtually impossible task. Besides, these sects also effectively moderate and mediate political opposition through religious channels, so a general state of harmony and tolerance of the religious and political institutions is maintained (Wilson, 1976).

Next, *the general tolerance of the Church* is explained by the fact that American society had not experienced strong mass movements like the worker's movements or ideological movements of Europe, which would have otherwise flamed the public sentiments against the traditional institutions. The Church for its part, also avoided criticism of its by the influential sections, by aligning itself with the ruling ideology and the status quo and the socio-political system, which on the whole had provided good opportunities to the people to advance their interests in a free and plentiful land like the U.S.A.

The working class in the United States unlike in Western Europe had abstained from launching ideological crusades against the status quo and the Church which supports it, primarily because the economic conditions in a land of massive opportunities have permitted a comfortable economic position for the working class (Lipset, 1963: 530; Vernon, 1962). It always sought to advance this position with the help of a stable social environment free from ferment. Thus it was led to think in similar terms as that of the middle class. Thus the Church did not become the victim of the ideological current which prevailed in the strife climate of West Europe.

However, it is to be noted that all sections of the working class *are not equally* religious. The manual workers in particular, constituting the lowest segment of the working class are not as closely incorporated in the American society as the higher segment. These manual workers, despite not being vocal about their opposition to the Church, however, do not attend the Church regularly. This reveals a greater degree of alienation from religion.

3. Religion and Social Stratification: Western Europe

The upper classes are more closely associated with religious matters. They show the highest level of religious participation in the affairs of the Church. They are the people with higher education, income and better professions (Fogarty, 1966: 397; Isambert, 1966: 400; Wickham, 1966: 407, 424; Glock and Stark, 1965: 194; Jukić, 1973: 254-265; Pin, 1966). Ireland, however, is an exception. Here all classes more or less equally involve themselves in matters of religion since it is in the interest of national integration and national independence.

The United States and Western Europe reveal *similar trends* in levels of secularisation. The level of secularisation is high among the lower class, especially the manual workers and low among the upper classes. However, the level is higher in Western Europe than in the United States (Vidich, 1986; Hamberg, 1994; Lechner, 1996; Bruce, 1995; Stark, 1997). The working class in Western Europe, in particular, shows a greater degree of non-involvement in the Church than the working class in the United States which to a large extent participates in the social and religious groups and institutions. In Western Europe, the non-participation is more visible, and there are fewer numbers of sects and religious movements for them to indulge themselves in.

To elaborate, the important reasons for this difference in the degree of secularisation between the United States and Western Europe can be found in their respective historical contexts, in the roots of their socio-cultural systems. In the U.S., the Church represented a *unifying force*, integrating the various sects and cultural groups. It remained and continues to remain at the heart of the people's belief system and behavior (Wilson, 1978). However, things have been *different* in Western Europe. In the beginnings of Christianity the Church was considered

to be above partisanship, and people of all social strata could assert their faith in it. Later, the Church abandoned this image of integration and came to be identified with the interests of upper classes (Vernon, 1962; Jukić, 1973: 264; Weber, 1976: 415). The lower classes no longer found it unifying as social divisions sharpened, the Church developed an identity close to that of the ruling class and the lower classes were gradually alienated from it. The Church seemed no longer to be representing their interests, and defiance of the Church appeared to the lower class as a significant way of expressing their opposition to the dominance of the higher classes.

Growing secularisation in Western Europe is the product of the fact that the Church there did not change much and did not adapt itself to the new social habits and ways of life of the changing society (Jukić, 1973). In the U.S. this change occurred in harmony with the changing social needs of the population. In Western Europe, the Church retained most of its conservative values in the ways of the medieval period. Change towards liberalisation was painfully slow.

In Western Europe the Church became *more of a political institution*, supporting the dominant political system and freely nurturing the political values of those in power so that its political appearance completely overshadowed its religious character. The Church as an institution always provided the justification for the existing power system, regardless how unacceptable it might have been for the common people (Vernon, 1962). Politicisation of the Church openly favoring the status quo at a time when social divisions were sharpening steadily, deprived it of the last basis for the common man's sympathy. If its religious identity is unifying, its political role, now visibly dominating over the religious identity is infinitely divisive. And it divided and slowly alienated the people to a considerable extent, resulting in a great degree of secularisation.

In the United States popular discontent against the Church could be *diffused and weakened* by being effectively channelised into the numerous sects that existed and cropped up for this purpose (Russell, 1955; Bartz, 1984). This would bring down opposition to the Church to a level where it is less able to challenge the existence of the institution or divert popular sympathy from it. But in Western European societies these channels were not available to that extent. Opposition to Church among the working class, since the French Revolution, found an effective identity with the leftist orientations and got reinforced considerably. The working class while working against the Church was also helped by radical tendencies.

The role of the Church during the Second World War is an example. It was dysfunctional to its role as a unifier. The Church in some occasions supported Fascist forces. In the war, the role of the Church as an integrative force received a severe setback, as differences on national, social lines overshadowed and predominated over considerations of religious unity. As these divisions strongly and actively surfaced, religious oneness, vital to the functioning of the Church as an institution of

unity and fraternity among people, was put into low key. And the role of the Church in supporting oppressive systems led to widespread disillusionment among the common people, among those opposed to oppressive regimes and among those who looked at the Church for religious solace. The cleavage between the Church and the people widened.

4. Religion and Social Stratification: India

India constitutes an *entirely different* and *far more complex* case for the kind of analysis that has been done in respect of European and American societies in previous sections. The religious principles of Hinduism and the social structure that is closely based upon this, are complexities which are not easily explained by the theories and methodology used to study societies in the West (Weber, 1967: 331). To add to these problems, there is the problem of lack of adequate research into the sociology of religion in Hindu society. The first investigators in the early part of this century, mostly outsiders attracted by the tremendous spectacle of Hinduism, were engaged in understanding what is different in Hindu society and religion in relation to theirs. Later, after the Second World War researchers did build up some sort of outlook to study religion in its internal essence, and to find out its meaning from within. Some Indian authors also joined in this enterprise, laying the foundation of a sociology of religion. But here too the problems of inadequacy persisted. The studies were mainly theoretical. Empirical research, wherever it was undertaken, was mostly confined to the study of small villages and the like, thereby limiting the scope for generalisation into broader fields. This problem cannot be said to have been solved even today and, therefore, a comparative study of Hindu religion and society with that of the West is extremely difficult to attempt, especially if one tries to follow the yardsticks employed in the context of Western societies (Weber, 1967).

In the Christian West, the Church is a *powerful institution* visibly commanding the religious pursuits of people within its fold. Thus the Church can be the most important institution the study of which can provide comprehensive clues to understand Christianity. But in Hindu society, *there is no comparable structure* which can be used to study the religious behavior in its entirety. Religion and social habits are imperceptibly interlinked to such extent that it is not possible to identify all the elements of a religious pursuit through a single institution, for example, through a study of the temples, because temples hardly play a role in isolation (Weber, 1967; Bose, 1967).

In Hindu society, one of the most remarkable features is *the closeness* with which religion interacts with and determines the shape of the social structure and the way of life (Saran, 1977; Weber, 1967). The influence of religion is wide and all-pervasive, it is spread into almost all aspects of living in a most intimate way. This close proximity is unmatched by the relationship between religion and social liv-

ing in the West. In Western societies, religion has tended to be associated with social life in a functional way. It does not act so much as a restraint or an incentive to the extent that Hindu religion affects the living of Indian people (Hindus).

The example of this closeness is the caste system (Hutton, 1963; Beteille, 1977), which is the most comprehensive of all the characteristics that define the Hindu system. There had been several explanations of the origins of the caste system. Around the turn of the present century, explanations of the caste system were advanced in terms of factors such as "secular, racial, priestly exclusivism, extreme forms of aristocracy, totem and taboo, etc." (Lannoy, 1975: 138). Caste was also described on a secular basis. But such explanations do not approximate to what is real about the Hindu caste system. As Lannoy has correctly pointed out, these theories fail because "they do not take into account hierarchic gradation and India's religious concepts" (Lannoy, 1975: 139). And it is these religious concepts and the gradation based upon them that is crucial to understand the system.

A distinctive approach to study the caste system was contained in the pioneering works of Dumont and was subsequently followed by Lannoy. Caste is viewed as a system of unity and integration. The negative view of caste as creating social contradictions is replaced by a "uniquely consistent and at the same time flexible framework large enough to embrace these contradictions" (Lannoy, 1975: 139). Caste is seen as a "distinctive variant of universal tendency to hierarchization" (Lannoy, 1975: 139). It is not divisive of social ways of living but a system which embraces the diverse and hierarchically placed large social groups in a single integrative operational framework which facilitates social life and prevent possibilities of collapse arising out of the heterogeneous composition of society.

Such system has three basic characteristics: (1) opposition of pure and impure, (2) hierarchy, and (3) specialization. All these are, in the final analysis, reducible to the "one fundamental conception", i. e., "opposition of the pure and the impure", which is a unique one, embodying the other two principles (Dumont, 1966). "This opposition underlines hierarchy, which is the superiority of the pure to the impure, underlies separation because the pure and the impure must be kept separate, and underlines the division of labor because pure and impure occupations must likewise be kept separate. The whole is founded on the necessary and hierarchical co-existence of the two opposites" (Dumont, 1966).

5. Conclusion

To conclude, trends towards secularisation in the U.S.A. and Western Europe appear to be similar, except that the latter reveals a higher degree of it than the former. In both societies, religion as institutionalised in the Church, carries the image of a pro-status-quo, seeming to justify the place and role of the upper classes in the social hierarchy. The historical role of the Church has been such as to

closely identify itself with the interests of higher classes as against the interests of lower classes largely constituted by the working class. As the Weberian theory would suggest, the upper class members always looked upon the religion as providing the mystical sanction to the material reality of their being placed at privileged position vis-a-vis the lower classes. The Church did nothing in order to discourage this trend. On the other hand, the lower classes always thought of their inferior positions as related to divine dispensation, they always reconciled themselves with the bitter reality, with the hope for a better position in the next life. Religion provided the escape from reality and provided for people's acceptance of their present existence. Their alienation from the Church was diffused in the United States mainly due to the mediation of the various sects, whereas it often erupted into radicalism in Western Europe, especially among the post-revolution French working class.

A study of relationship between religion and social stratification in the Indian society cannot be made in same manner as that of the Western societies, mainly because of peculiarities of Indian situation which makes it distinct and different from the West. Firstly, the process of secularisation in India does not have the same meaning as in the West. In the West, where religion and the society interact in a highly institutionalized manner, secularisation process relates to closeness or separation from the Church. But in India, where the institutionalization had not attained any significant level, and where religion and society are intimately connected, the secularisation process becomes different, such as imitation of the higher caste by lower castes (Sanskritisation) and imitation of the West (Westernization). In both cases there is no question of going in or out of religion, but the problem relates to imitation. These indicators are peculiarly Indian and therefore the parameters of secularisation in the West and in India are different.

Secondly, in the West the function of religion in promoting social integration or disintegration has become less important as the religious aspect of life becomes distinct and separate from the other aspects. In India where the two aspects are strongly bound together, this social function of religion becomes important. For example, in multi-religious, caste-divided Indian society, religion has often become, for certain castes or religious groups, a medium or channel through which they seek to advance their interests and positions in the society. Thus the members of that caste or religion rally solidly and unitedly to achieve their goal. This unity at various micro levels, however, becomes dysfunctional to the unity at the larger national level (Bose, 1967; Saksena, 1977; Jha, 1977). So the society is ridden with communal, caste-based tensions. Thus religion while a factor of integration at small levels becomes a factor of disintegration at the broader level of society as a whole.

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Neki metodologijski problemi istraživanja odnosa religije i društvene slojevitosti u različitim društvima

Sažetak

Predmet ovoga rada jest raščlamba iskustvenih (empirijskih) istraživanja odnosa između religije i socijalne stratifikacije u različitim društvima i kulturama temeljem empirijskih indikatora u svrhu identifikacije metodologijskih poteškoća s kojima se istraživači susreću. Problem je posebice važan zato što je odnos religije i socijalne stratifikacije jedan od najzanimljivijih i najsloženijih u sociologiji religije, i jer bi njegovo rješenje omogućilo provedbu komparativnih istraživanja kojih sada nema.

Autorica ističe da je proučavanje odnosa između religije i socijalne stratifikacije, odnosno klasnoga (ili kastinskog) društva samo jedan segment ili aspekt religijskog fenomena, koji sužava prostor religije kao razmjerno (relativno) autonomne pojave, jer se religija samo jednim dijelom oslanja na zbilju društvene slojevitosti. Ipak, u ovom je radu pokušaj raščlambе tog odnosa poduzet ponajprije zato da bi se ukazalo na svu složenost i problematičnost odnosa religije i socijalne stratifikacije. Pozornost je pritom usmjerena na istraživanja odnosa između socijalne stratifikacije i religije u SAD, Zapadnoj Europi i Indiji, društvima s izrazitim posebnostima socijalne stratifikacije, kulturnoga i religijskog života.

Autorica nastoji ustanoviti sličnosti i razlike između religija, odnosno crkvi i hramova na tim područjima. Ukazujući na probleme dosadašnjih teorijsko-metodologijskih pristupa i posebice njihove operacionalizacije u empirijskim istraživanjima (empirijski indikatori društvene strukture, religije i religioznosti), ona je u radu naznačila teškoće s kojima se susreću istraživači pri pokušaju pronalazjenja značajki koje su zajedničke ili različite u religijama pojedinih područja svijeta. Te je nalaze autorica sažela u zaključku.

Ključne riječi: metodologija, religija, socijalna stratifikacija, sociologija religije.

Primljeno: 10. prosinca 1998.

Pribvačeno: 21. svibnja 1999.

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Quelques problèmes de méthodologie en matière de recherche sur les rapports entre la religion et la stratification sociale dans différents contextes

Résumé

Le sujet de cet article est une analyse des recherches empiriques sur les rapports entre la religion et la stratification sociale dans différentes sociétés et cultures, sur la base d'indicateurs empiriques, dans le but d'identifier les difficultés méthodologiques auxquelles se heurtent les chercheurs. Le problème est particulièrement important, car le rapport entre la religion et la stratification sociale est l'un des plus intéressants et des plus complexes de la sociologie de la religion et parce que sa solution permettrait la mise en pratique de recherches comparatives qui n'existent pas actuellement.

L'auteur souligne que l'étude des rapports entre la religion et la stratification sociale, à savoir une société formée de classes (ou de castes), n'est qu'un segment ou un aspect du phénomène de la religion, lequel limite l'espace de la religion en tant que phénomène relativement autonome, car la religion ne se fonde qu'en partie sur la réalité de la stratification sociale. Néanmoins, dans cet article, la tentative d'analyser ce rapport a été entreprise en premier lieu pour montrer toute la complexité et le caractère problématique du rapport entre la religion et la stratification sociale. En outre, l'attention est orientée vers la recherche sur le rapport entre la stratification sociale et la religion aux U.S.A., en Europe occidentale et en Inde, sociétés ayant des particularités marquées dans la stratification sociale, la vie culturelle et religieuse.

L'auteur s'efforce d'établir les similitudes et les différences entre les religions, c'est-à-dire les églises et les temples de ces régions. En indiquant les problèmes des approches théoriques et méthodologiques jusqu'à présent et tout particulièrement pour leur opérationnalisation dans les recherches empiriques (indicateurs empiriques de la structure sociale, de la religion et de la religiosité), l'auteur a présenté dans son article les difficultés auxquelles se heurtent les chercheurs lorsqu'ils tentent de trouver des caractéristiques communes ou différentes dans les religions de certaines régions du monde. L'auteur a résumé ces résultats dans la conclusion.

Mots clé: méthodologie, religion, sociologie de la religion, stratification sociale.

Reçu: le 10 décembre 1998

Accepté: le 21 mai 1999