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Social Movement Theory and the Sociology of Religion: Toward a New Synthesis

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Abstract

Despite a similar genesis in the classic nineteenth century theories of social change, scholarly analyses of religious and social movements have

frequently addressed different problems and formulated separate paradigms. This divergence is discussed with reference to historical, ideological, and conceptual factors. Current religions and social movements, it is proposed, increasingly have much in common both structurally and ideologically. Three processes — contestation, globalization, and empowerment — are identified as characteristic of contemporary movements. The article concludes by advocating a fresh perspective on religion and contemporary social movements where the central thrust would be on the construction of new grievances, identities, and modes of association by collective actors.

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