

Religion maintains the status quo

[Politics](#), [Marxism](#)



Religion maintains the status quo. Access arguments for and against this The term ' Status Quo' descends from the Latin term meaning the " existing state of affairs". To maintain status quo is to keep things in society the way they currently are. Marxists, feminists, functionalists and fundamentalists all have views on how religion has the ability to keep the status quo. Feminists predominantly see religion as a conservative force. They have seen religion as maintaining patriarchy. Christianity, especially, has evidence to support this view; " Our Father" is mainly seen as a male figure and Eve was created as a " friend" for Adam. This supports the view that religion serves to keep women in the traditional place; less important than men. However, some evidence shows that this may not have always been true. Such examples include many Goddesses that play a main role in Greek and Roman religion; all women. From the Marxist perspective, religion is a ' conservative force'. According to Karl Marx, religion justifies the dominance of the ruling class and provides consolation for the subject class. Therefore, religion discourages social change. According to Marx, concerning the subject class, religion is ' the opium of the people'. It provides consolation for the misery of oppression by offering false promises of external happiness in the next life. With the ruling class, religion often legitimates the position of the ruling class. We see again that religion acts as a conservative force that maintains things the way they are. Consequently, there is evidence to support the Marxist view that religion is a conservative force. From their perspective, Marx sees religion as largely shaped by economic factors. As part of the superstructure of society, religion reflects the infrastructure or economic base. Weber said that in certain cases, the opposite was true; that religion

can help to shape entire economic systems and bring radical changes to society as a whole. Overall, functionalist theories have seen religion as a force for stability rather than change. It reinforces consensus and deals with life crises, which threaten to disrupt our society. Religion is seen as a conservative force that maintains a status quo, keeping things the way they are. According to Malinowski, religion serves to reduce the tensions that occur from events which threaten to cause disruption in our social life, such as birth and marriage. Talcott Parsons sees religion as reinforcing value consensus e. g. the Christian Ten Commandments that show the norms and values of us and other Western societies. However, Functionalists have been criticised for a one sided view on religion e. g. for neglecting instances of religion as a force for social change. This criticism is now totally fair; Parsons argued that Christianity not only reinforced, but also helped with producing norms and values leading to the shaping of modern societies. In recent times, there has been a steady rise in the number of religious fundamentalists, in particular Christian Fundamentalists in the USA, the Middle East and Far East. Fundamentalists aim to make things the way they were, rather than the way things are. In some respect, they are conservative, but in another they are not because they seek change in existing society; against the status quo. The rise in Islamic fundamentalists over the last 40 years is a reaction to the belief that the world has gone wrong and God's plans for the way we should live has been ignored. This group put the blame on the way the world has changed down to the West; in particular the USA, which to them is a place where money is worshipped rather than God and the Devil is winning the battle for evil there. Overall,

some researchers see fundamentalism as a particularly conservative form of religion; it looks backwards rather than forward and it rejects many of the changes in modern society. Fundamentalism can be seen as a force for change, as they do try to change society even though their model for change is based on the past. In conclusion, it is not very clear to see whether religion is a force for change or as maintaining things as they are (keeping the status quo). Theories such as Feminism, Marxism and Functionalism believe religion does not support social change, however these are confronted by writers such as Weber and Fundamentalists.