

Religion is generally
defined in many
sources



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Religion is generally defined in many sources as any specific system of belief about deity, often-involving rituals, a code of ethics, and a philosophy of life.

In addition to this, Don Swenson defines religion in terms of the sacred: "

Religion is the individual and social experience of the sacred that is manifested in mythologies, ritual, ethos, and integrated into a collective or organization" (Swenson, D. 1999). Therefore, religions have had huge effects on people in many areas like their cultures, life styles, etc. in all eras of history. With the formation of communication, interaction among people, cultures and also religions are accelerated, so people have tried to spread their ideas and beliefs with the help of communication in different forms such as mass media. However, people have used the mass media except for its real purpose for propaganda of religions or in contrast they used the religions as an object for mass media. Therefore, there are two kind of relationship between religion and media from the past up till now; pressure of religion on media and effects of media on religion. The first relationship between religion and media is the negative effects and pressure of religion on media that restricted the freedom of ideas. It can be seen many examples that support this thesis in history and today. In Medieval Europe is one of the best-known and clear example for the pressure of religion in past. In this era, for example, church prevented the new scientific ideas against their religious ideology. As one of the illustration, " Galileo was called before the Inquisition in Rome and forced to take back his statements that the sun, not the Earth, is the center of the solar system"(The Age of Enlightenment, 2002). That's why, church controlled mass media and prohibited the publishing from another hand in order to protect its power. Actually, there were not mass media as developed as today's technology like newspapers, TV, and the <https://assignbuster.com/religion-is-generally-defined-in-many-sources/>

Internet in this time. Nevertheless, they communicated and interacted in different ways such as books, sculptures, or arts. Therefore, media are instruments of transmission and they are necessary to the church so that people can deliver a message. Much like trucks or trains are used to deliver other types of products or merchandise. However, after the reform, church lost its power and many books that include free ideas published in the enlightenment age in Europe. Besides examples from history, we can also see the example of the Medieval Europe today in many strict Islam regimes like Iran and Afghanistan. Especially in Iran, media can not use free expression because of the pressure of government that is based on strict religion beliefs. Saeed Emani, a senior official of the Intelligence Ministry, recommended that " the hard-liners should impose a number of restrictions on the freedom of writers, the press and artists, and place 'plants' among reformist organizations to 'create discord'"(1998). It is clearly seen that Iran becomes the present version of Medieval Europe that closes its doors to outside. In Afghanistan, moreover, it is impossible to take sides of America in media in the time of Taliban administration. On the whole, it is clearly said that religions have still had a significant role on freedom of speech in some regions of the world. Addition to the pressure of religion on media, the second relationship between religion and media is the impression of media on religion. That is to say, religion is used as a object that stimulate the consciences of people by television programs, newspapers, news, etc. which are the base of mass media. In fact, the mass media now shape the images and symbols that carry public meanings. That's why, religious images used to perform this function, but now television and the mass media try to embody some of the abstract beliefs of culture and provide a basic

framework of knowledge and action. For this reason, most television viewers do not watch religious programming. In fact, many television viewers appear to avoid religious programming, because religious programming carries a negative connotation. According to Chilean research center, CENECA, which regularly undertakes specific research projects for the Catholic Church, specifically religious programming is not spiritual because it does not enable participation nor does it enable a sense of community belonging. They find it predictable and not caring (1998). In Turkish media, this kind of images are published and broadcasted too much. For instance, Show TV frequently used the religion as an object in their news program in order to attract the people's attention. However, many of them do not carry the status of news, because they are rarely related the today's situation. Besides provocation of Show TV, Channel 7 also uses the people's faiths for propaganda to realize some aims in society. Maybe their approaches of two channels towards religion are completely the opposite, but both of them cause a chaos and civil strife in society. As a result of these impressions of both religion and media on each other that were mentioned above, it can be bravely accepted that laicism should be not only in politics but also in media, because the social success can only realize with the unity in society. Media has a crucial role in this mission. Thus, media should not try to effect the freedom of faith or vice versa, in contrast they try to escape from the pressure of religious ideas in order to obtain the objectivity and freedom of idea in media.