

Comparing and contrasting definitions of religion



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Comparing and Contrasting Definitions of Religion Twentieth century German theologian Rudolph Otto defines religion as the outcome of one's personal experiences of interaction with the holy phenomenon. In other words, every human is blessed with the presence of the sacred powers in the form of conscience, which urges him perform virtuous deeds and abstain from the profane and desecrated ones. It is the same call that forces human to seek the help of someone Supreme Being at the hour of distress and need. Since the Supreme Being protects humans from disasters, problems and agony, such spiritual experiences increase the level of faith and endorse the trust of humans in the Holy Being. Similarly, illustrious thinker, philosopher and father of Socialism Karl Marx interprets religion as the call of the suppressed stratum of society against the cruelties, injustices and malpractices being inflicted upon them by the ruthless oppressors. Thus, the poor, helpless and downtrodden individuals have belief in some Powerful Being, Which can hear their call and save them from the utter distress they have been undergoing. Since Marxist perspective vehemently condemns exploitation of the haves-not at the hands of the haves, it inter-links every religious, political, social, cultural and economic activity as the by-product of conflict between the social classes at large. It is therefore Marx takes religion as the humble call to High Heavens from the mouth of the oppressed against the oppressor. On the other hand, renowned Austrian psychologist Sigmund Freud declares religion mere an emotional disturbance that can be compared to the fears and anxiety man experiences in his childhood. Being an atheist, Freud seldom believes in spiritualism and religious faith; on the contrary, he measures each and everything in the scale of logic. He associates every human dream with the sex instinct, where dreams are actually the

expression of sexual feelings man contains in his conscious and subconscious. On the basis of his philosophy, he views seeking help from the supernatural and metaphysical powers mere the outcome of inner fears that grow with man since his childhood. Religion is, according to famous theologian Paul Tillich (1957), the name of surrendering every activity to a single command, which enjoys most imperative position in human life, and every human activity is directly dependent of it. In simple words, religious faith is most important object of human life, which gives meaning to life and gratifies all intellectual pursuits in a powerful manner.

Two Reasons in Support of Marxist Perspective: By critically examining all the above-described definitions of religion, Marx's interpretation appears in proximity to reality. Looking into the history of all religious faiths, it becomes evident that the advent of the religion was actually the reaction of malpractices and inequalities being committed by the powerful stratum against the weak. It is particularly the case with the Abrahamic religions, as founders of Judaism, Christianity and Islam represented the poor and downtrodden people, which had been leading a miserable life in society. Secondly, it is the essential part of human nature that when man is under the state of subjugation and exploitation, and loses every hope of getting relieved from that state of affairs, he quite instinctively seeks the support from Heavens, as he consciously and unconsciously have faith that his Lord would certainly remove all his worries and problems within a jiffy.

Two Reasons against Freud's interpretation of Religion: Freud wrongly states religion as equivalent to the childhood neurosis due to the very reality that it is not the fears that force humans worship the Lord; nor does man obeys the Lord because of the fear of punishment in this life and in the life Hereinafter. On the contrary, it is

<https://assignbuster.com/comparing-and-contrasting-definitions-of-religion/>

actually sheer feelings of gratitude towards the Lord for His countless bounties that urge the humans to have belief in religion and seek His support at any perturbed situation. Secondly, though childhood fears remain with man in grown years, yet they do not regulate his activities in mature years. It is therefore the humans having belief in religion also commit crimes and get indulged into sinful activities. Personal Definition of Religion: The above-described definitions provide a crystal clear image of religion, which appears to be supportive in interpreting religion in one's own words. Thus, religion is actually the blessings of the Lord which He showers on human mind and heart in the form of various spiritual experiences as well as hard times that realize man the power, might and benevolence of the Lord. It also insists the humans on dedicating his life to the commandments issued by the Lord, where fear of punishment and hope of reward in eternal life also play their role in strengthening man's belief on religion. Hence, based on personal spiritual experiences, limitations of human powers, fear of failure and castigation and intention to submit to the commands of the Lord pave the way towards following one religious belief or the other. Works Cited " Various Definitions of Religion." Retrieved from <http://web.pdx.edu/~tothm/religion/Definitions.htm>