

Further Reading

DEFINITIONS OF RELIGION FROM DIFFERENT SCHOLARS

1. Emile Durkheim (Sociologist)

Durkheim defined religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices connected to sacred things that unite all members of a church, or a religious community, into one single moral community. Religion, to Durkheim, was essentially a social institution reinforcing social cohesion, collective conscience, and social solidarity.

He has also pointed out the role of religion in binding societies together, saying that it is through shared beliefs and practices that people manage to live harmoniously.

2. Max Weber (Sociologist)

Weber's work focused on religion and social change. According to Weber, religion was a forcefully guiding power in the life of each individual and in the life of human society. To Weber, religion could propel history along its track and mold economic and social life.

In his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber held the Protestant Reformation responsible (more precisely, Calvinism) for those changes that gave rise to capitalism in the West. He suggested that religious ideas also played their part in the development of specific social structures together with values.

3. Sigmund Freud (Psychologist)

Freud viewed religion as a psychological phenomenon created out of people's yearning for safety and comfort. He considered religion to be one of the projections, with an idealized father figure, God, created by humanity in order to mediate between the individual and those merciless demands of existence.

In his book *The Future of an Illusion*, he said that religion is the giant neurosis of humanity to overcome profound fears and wishes, mostly in relation to death, pain, and things not known.

4. Karl Marx (Philosopher and Economist)

The well-known view of Marx on religion is that it is the "opium of the people." He believed that religion was a tool used by the ruling classes to oppress the working class and maintain the status quo. For Marx, religion served to divert attention from material inequalities and social injustices.

Marx viewed religion as a distraction that gave the oppressed false hope and consolation without addressing their actual material needs. He held the view that religion could only be overcome when the material conditions of society were altered.

5. William James (Philosopher and Psychologist)

He described religion as a private entity that gives deeper meaning and significance to the life of a person. In his work *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, he related it more to subjectivism and emotion, arguing that religious experiences were valuable and might produce personal changes.

He was more interested in understanding how religion worked in the lives of individuals, rather than being attached to institutional or doctrinal definitions.