

Comparative Religion I World Religions

RELIGION IN GENERAL

What is Religion?

Religion is "The obedience, service, or adoration rendered to the object of one's worship." (Is God Real to You? Booklet by H.W. Armstrong)


Religion is "The belief in a divine or superhuman power to be obeyed and worshipped." (Webster's Dictionary)

Religion is "A system of holy forms providing an all-embracing life orientation." (PATHS OF FAITH, Hutchinson)

Religion is "The belief that life has purpose is the beginning and essence of religion." (WHAT THE GREAT RELIGIONS BELIEVE, Gaehr)

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FIVE THEORIES OF THE
ORIGIN OF RELIGION

1. Animistic – The belief that spirits are in things and creatures
2. Nature Worship – Elements of nature and creation were worshipped since they were not understood (i.e. Sun, thunder, lightning, moon)
3. Original Monotheism – The belief in one Supreme God above all others
4. Magic – The belief in magical forces that control the forces of nature. Certain people have magical powers
5. Wish Fulfillment – The belief that there are really no gods at all and that man makes up gods to fulfill his wishes. Man shapes his god his way.

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Sigmund Freud believed that religion evolved from GUILT.


Marx said that man makes religion not religion makes man.

Religion says that man is sick and each one has its own diagnosis and prognosis. All religions seek to focus on who man is and what is the meaning of life. (Hutchinson)

All religions realize the need to restore man to a higher spiritual state.

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FOUR STRUCTURES OF RELIGION

1. Myth – How beliefs and practices are transmitted – orally, or written – legends, traditions, lore
2. Ritual – Symbolic actions of believers showing reverence and devotion – example - baptism
3. Morality – The set of rules - do's and don'ts
4. Community – How the believers interact with one another in a common bond

These structures are the foundations of religion according to Hutchinson.

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Expressions in Religion

- Theoretical – How religion expresses itself – what is said or taught
- Practical – What is done or what adherent is asked to do
- Sociological – How that religion interacts with other religions

Robert Ellwood in MANY PEOPLES, MANY FAITHS brings these points out.

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The Objects (Goals) of Religion

- Within the World – Looks for fulfillment in the context of this present world – Examples: Taoism, Tribal
- Beyond the World – Looks for fulfillment outside of this present world. Resist the temptations of this world and achieve final release – Examples – Hinduism, Buddhism
- Within and Beyond the World – Focus attention on both. Live decently now with hope for tomorrow. Examples – Christianity, Judaism, Islam

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Similarities in Religions

1. Belief in a Supreme Being
2. Claim of Divine Incarnation
3. Claim of Supernatural Origin of the Founders
4. Claim of Divine Revelation
5. Claim of Inspired Scripture
6. Reports of Miracles
7. The Community of Believers is Sacred
8. Principle of the Golden Rule
9. Hope of a Universal Religion
10. Belief in an Afterlife

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Populations of Religions

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Populations in Numbers

- Primal Religions – 245 Million
- Hinduism – 900 Million
- Buddhism – 360 Million
- Chinese Traditional – 225 Million
- Shinto – 4 Million
- Judaism – 14 Million
- Islam – 1.3 Billion
- Christianity – 2 Billion

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Three Geographical Locations

The major religions sprung from three general locations in the world

- India – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism (Not in ABC course)
- Far East (Orient) – Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto
- Near East – Judaism, Christianity, Islam

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Biblical Overview of Religion

Genesis 1:1 – Original Monotheism in the beginning
 Genesis 1:31 – Everything made was good
 Genesis 2:1 – God had guidelines for humans
 Genesis 2:3 – A day of worship established
 Genesis 4:1-4 – A child, Cain is born and sacrifices offered
 Genesis 3:1 – Satan, as the serpent, influences Eve – false religion is introduced with Satan as god. Man determines what is good for himself and what is not. He makes God in his image.
 II Corinthians 4:4 – Satan has blinded the minds of individuals
 Ephesians 2:2 – He is the prince of the power of the air

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Biblical Overview Continued

Revelation 12:9 – Satan has deceived the whole world
 II Corinthians 11:13-15 – Satan has his ministers
 II Corinthians 11:4 – Another Jesus
 Galatians 1:6-9 – Another gospel
 Matthew 15:9 – There can be false worship of Christ
 Romans 6:16 – Whomsoever you submit to, you are his servant
 Revelation 17:1:6,9 – The great mystery religion that intermixes with world
 Isaiah 59:1-2 – God did not depart from man, but man from God
 Matthew 13:67-17 – Blessed are your eyes 'cause you can see!

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ESSAY QUESTION

What does "Religion" mean to you?

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