

Religion

What is Religion: - Religion is a social-cultural system of designated behaviors and practices, morals, worldviews, texts, sanctified places, prophecies, ethics, or organizations, that relates humanity to supernatural, transcendental, or spiritual elements. However, there is no scholarly consensus over what precisely constitutes a religion.

Different religions may or may not contain various elements ranging from the divine, sacred things, faith, a supernatural being or supernatural beings or "some sort of ultimacy and transcendence that will provide norms and power for the rest of life". Religious practices may include rituals, sermons, tribute or worship (of deities and/or saints), sacrifices, festivals, feasts, trances, initiations, funerary services, matrimonial services, meditation, prayer, music, art, dance, public service, or other aspects of human culture. Religions have sacred histories and narratives, which may be preserved in sacred scriptures, and symbols and holy places, that aim mostly to give a meaning to life. Religions may contain symbolic stories, which are sometimes said by followers to be true, that have the side purpose of explaining the origin of life, the universe, and other things. Traditionally, faith, in addition to reason, has been considered a source of religious beliefs.

There are an estimated 10,000 distinct religions worldwide. About 84% of the world's population is affiliated with Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, or some form of folk religion. The religiously unaffiliated demographic includes those who do not identify with any particular religion, atheists, and agnostics. While the religiously unaffiliated have grown globally, many of the religiously unaffiliated still have various religious beliefs.

The study of religion encompasses a wide variety of academic disciplines, including theology, comparative religion and social scientific studies. Theories of religion offer various explanations for the origins and workings of religion, including the ontological foundations of religious being and belief.

The word is derived from the Latin *religiō*, the ultimate origins of which are unclear. One possible interpretation traced to [Cicero](#), connects *lego* read, i.e. *re* (again) with *lego* in the sense of choose, go over again or consider carefully. The definition of *religio* by [Cicero](#) is "the proper performance of rites in worship of the gods."

Julius Caesar used *religio* to mean "obligation of an oath" when discussing captured soldiers making an oath to their captors. The Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder used the term *religio* on elements in that they worship the sun and the moon. Modern scholars such as Tom Harpur and Joseph Campbell favor the derivation from *ligare* bind, connect, probably from a prefixed *re-ligare*, i.e. *re* (again) + *ligare* or to reconnect, which was made prominent by St. Augustine, following the interpretation given by Lactantius in *Divinae institutiones*. The medieval usage alternates with *ordo* in designating bonded communities like those

of monastic orders: 'we hear of the 'religion' of the Golden Fleece, of a knight 'of the religion of Avys'(Portuguese military order of medieval)

In classic antiquity, 'religio' broadly meant conscientiousness, sense of right, moral obligation, or duty to anything. In the ancient and medieval world, the etymological Latin root *religio* was understood as an individual virtue of worship in everyday contexts; never as doctrine, practice, or actual source of knowledge. In general, *religio* referred to broad social obligations towards anything including family, neighbors, rulers, and even towards God. *Religio* was most often used by the ancient Romans not in the context of a relation towards gods, but as a range of general emotions such as hesitation, caution, anxiety, fear; feelings of being bound, restricted, inhibited; which arose from heightened attention in any mundane context. The term was also closely related to other terms like *scrupulus* which meant "very precisely" and some Roman authors related the term *superstitio*, which meant too much fear or anxiety or shame, to *religio* at times. When *religio* came into English around the 1200s as religion, it took the meaning of "life bound by monastic vows" or monastic orders. The compartmentalized concept of religion, where religious things were separated from worldly things, was not used before the 1500s. The concept of religion was first used in the 1500s to distinguish the domain of the church and the domain of civil authorities.

In the ancient Greece, the Greek term *threskeia* was loosely translated into Latin as *religio* in late antiquity. The term was sparsely used in classical Greece but became more frequently used in the writings of Josephus in the first century CE. It was used in mundane contexts and could mean multiple things from respectful fear to excessive or harmfully distracting practices of others; to cultic practices. It was often contrasted with the Greek word *deisidaimonia* which meant too much fear.

The modern concept of religion, as an abstraction that entails distinct sets of beliefs or doctrines, is a recent invention in the English language. Such usage began with texts from the 17th century due to events such the splitting of Christendom during the Protestant Reformation and globalization in the age of exploration, which involved contact with numerous foreign cultures with non-European languages. Some argue that regardless of its definition, it is not appropriate to apply the term religion to non-Western cultures. Others argue that using religion on non-Western cultures distorts what people do and believe.

The concept of religion was formed in the 16th and 17th centuries, despite the fact that ancient sacred texts like the Bible, the Quran, and others did not have a word or even a concept of religion in the original languages and neither did the people or the cultures in which these sacred texts were written. For example, there is no precise equivalent of religion in Hebrew, and [Judaism](#) does not distinguish clearly between religious, national, racial, or ethnic identities. One of its central concepts is *halakha*, meaning the walk or path sometimes translated as law, which guides religious practice and belief and many aspects of daily life. Even though the beliefs and traditions of Judaism are found in the ancient world,

ancient Jews saw Jewish identity as being about an ethnic or national identity and did not entail a compulsory belief system or regulated rituals. Even in the 1st century CE, Josephus had used the Greek term *ioudaismos*, which some translate as Judaism today, even though he used it as an ethnic term, not one linked to modern abstract concepts of religion as a set of beliefs. It was in the 19th century that Jews began to see their ancestral culture as a religion analogous to Christianity. The Greek word *threskeia*, which was used by Greek writers such as Herodotus and Josephus, is found in the New Testament. *Threskeia* is sometimes translated as religion in today's translations, however, the term was understood as worship well into the medieval period. In the Quran, the Arabic word *din* is often translated as religion in modern translations, but up to the mid-1600s translators expressed *din* as law.

The Sanskrit word *dharma*, sometimes translated as religion, also means law, duty etc. Throughout classical South Asia, the study of law consisted of concepts such as penance through piety and ceremonial as well as practical traditions. Medieval Japan at first had a similar union between imperial law and universal or Buddha law, but these later became independent sources of power.

Throughout the Americas, Native Americans never had a concept of "religion" since their traditions do not fit into such European concepts.

Though traditions, sacred texts, and practices have existed throughout time, most cultures did not align with Western conceptions of religion since they did not separate everyday life from the sacred. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the terms Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, and [world religions](#) first entered the English language. No one self-identified as a Hindu or Buddhist or other similar terms before the 1800s. "Hindu" has historically been used as a geographical, cultural, and later religious identifier for people indigenous to the [Indian subcontinent](#). Throughout its long history, Japan had no concept of religion since there was no corresponding Japanese word, nor anything close to its meaning, but when American warships appeared off the coast of Japan in 1853 and forced the Japanese government to sign treaties demanding, among other things, freedom of religion, the country had to contend with this Western idea.

According to the philologist Max Müller in the 19th century, the root of the English word religion, the Latin *religio*, was originally used to mean only reverence for God or the Gods, careful pondering of divine things, [piety](#) (which Cicero further derived to mean diligence). Max Müller characterized many other cultures around the world, including Egypt, Persia, and India, as having a similar power structure at this point in history. What is called ancient religion today, they would have only called law.

[Social definitions of religion](#)

Religion is a [modern Western](#) concept. Parallel concepts are not found in many current and past cultures; there is no equivalent term for religion in many languages. Scholars have found it

difficult to develop a consistent definition, with some giving up on the possibility of a definition. Others argue that regardless of its definition, it is not appropriate to apply it to non-Western cultures.

The MacMillan Encyclopaedia of Religions states:

The very attempt to define religion, to find some distinctive or possibly unique essence or set of qualities that distinguish the religious from the remainder of human life, is primarily a Western concern. The attempt is a natural consequence of the Western speculative, intellectualistic, and scientific disposition. It is also the product of the dominant Western religious mode, what is called the Judeo-Christian climate or, more accurately, the theistic inheritance from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The theistic form of belief in this tradition, even when downgraded culturally, is formative of the dichotomous Western view of religion. That is, the basic structure of theism is essentially a distinction between a transcendent deity and all else, between the creator and his creation, between God and man.

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz (American Anthropologist) defined religion as a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

The theologian Antoine Vergote (a Belgian Roman Catholic priest, theologian, philosopher, psychologist and psychoanalyst) took the term supernatural simply to mean whatever transcends the powers of nature or human agency. He also emphasized the cultural reality of religion, which he defined as the entirety of the linguistic expressions, emotions and, actions and signs that refer to a supernatural being or supernatural beings.

Peter Mandaville (American academic and former government official) and Paul James define religion as a relatively-bounded system of beliefs, symbols and practices that addresses the nature of existence, and in which communion with others and Otherness is lived as if it both takes in and spiritually transcends socially-grounded ontologies of time, space, embodiment and knowing.

The sociologist [Émile Durkheim](#), in his seminal book *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, defined religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things". By sacred things he meant things "set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them". Sacred things are not, however, limited to gods or spirits.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (German Philosopher) in the late 18th century defined religion as "the feeling of absolute dependence".

His contemporary George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (German Philosopher) disagreed thoroughly, defining religion as "the Divine Spirit becoming conscious of Himself through the finite spirit."

Edward Burnett Tylor (English Anthropologist) defined religion in 1871 as "the belief in spiritual beings". He argued that narrowing the definition to mean the belief in a supreme deity or judgment after death or idolatry and so on, would exclude many peoples from the category of religious, and thus "has the fault of identifying religion rather with particular

developments than with the deeper motive which underlies them". He also argued that the belief in spiritual beings exists in all known societies.

Frederick Ferré (American Philosopher) who defined religion as "one's way of valuing most comprehensively and intensively".

Origin and Development of Religion

The earliest archaeological evidence of religious ideas dates back several hundred thousand years to the [Middle](#) and [Lower Palaeolithic](#) periods. Archaeologists take apparent intentional burials of [early Homo sapiens](#) from as early as 300,000 years ago as evidence of religious ideas. Other evidence of religious ideas includes symbolic artifacts from [Middle Stone Age](#) sites in Africa. However, the interpretation of early paleolithic artifacts, with regard to how they relate to religious ideas, remains controversial. Archaeological evidence from more recent periods is less controversial. Scientists generally interpret a number of artifacts from the [Upper Palaeolithic](#) (50,000-13,000 BCE) as representing religious ideas. Examples of Upper Palaeolithic remains associated with religious beliefs include the [lion man](#), the [Venus figurines](#), cave paintings from [Chauvet Cave](#) and the elaborate ritual burial from [Sungir](#).

In the 19th century researchers proposed various theories regarding the origin of religion, challenging earlier claims of a Christianity-like [urreligion](#). Early theorists [Edward Burnett Tylor](#) (1832-1917) and [Herbert Spencer](#) (1820-1903) emphasised the concept of [animism](#), while archaeologist [John Lubbock](#) (1834-1913) used the term "[fetishism](#)". Meanwhile, religious scholar [Max Müller](#) (1823-1900) theorized that religion began in [hedonism](#) and folklorist [Wilhelm Mannhardt](#) (1831-1880) suggested that religion began in "naturalism" – by which he meant mythological explanation of natural events. All of these theories have since been widely criticized; there is no broad consensus regarding the origin of religion.

[Pre-pottery Neolithic A Göbekli Tepe](#), the oldest religious site yet discovered anywhere^[10] includes circles of erected massive T-shaped stone pillars, the world's oldest known [megaliths](#) decorated with [abstract](#), enigmatic [pictograms](#) and [carved](#)-animal reliefs. The site, near the home place of original wild wheat, was built before the so-called [Neolithic Revolution](#), i.e., the beginning of [agriculture](#) and [animal husbandry](#) around 9000 BCE. But the construction of Göbekli Tepe implies organization of an advanced order not hitherto associated with [Paleolithic](#), [PPNA](#), or [PPNB](#) societies. The site, abandoned around the time the first agricultural societies started, is still being excavated and analyzed, and thus might shed light on the significance it had had for the religions of older, foraging communities, as well as for the general history of religions.

The [Pyramid Texts](#) from ancient Egypt, the oldest known [religious texts](#) in the world, date to between 2400-2300 BCE.

Surviving early copies of religious texts include:

- The [Upanishads](#), some of which date to the mid-first millennium BCE.
- The [Dead Sea Scrolls](#), representing fragmentary texts of the Hebrew [Tanakh](#); these scrolls were copied approximately 2000 years ago.

- Complete Hebrew texts, also of the [Tanakh](#), but translated into the [Greek language](#) ([Septuagint](#) 300-200 BC), were in wide use by the early 1st century CE.
- The Zoroastrian [Avesta](#), from a [Sassanian](#)-era master copy.

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have strived to classify religions. One widely accepted categorization that helps people understand different belief systems considers what or who people worship (if anything). Using this method of classification, religions might fall into one of these basic categories.

Religious Classification	What/Who Is Divine	Example
Polytheism	Multiple gods	Ancient Greeks and Romans
Monotheism	Single god	Judaism, Islam
Atheism	No deities	Atheism
Animism	Nonhuman beings (animals, plants, natural world)	Indigenous nature worship (Shinto)
Totemism	Human-natural being connection	Ojibwa (First Nations)

Note that some religions may be practised—or understood—in various categories. For instance, the Christian notion of the Holy Trinity (God, Jesus, Holy Spirit) defies the definition of monotheism to some scholars. Similarly, many Westerners view the multiple manifestations of Hinduism’s godhead as polytheistic, while Hindus might describe those manifestations as a monotheistic parallel to the Christian Trinity.

It is also important to note that every society also has nonbelievers, such as atheists, who do not believe in a divine being or entity, and agnostics, who hold that ultimate reality (such as God) is unknowable. While typically not an organized group, atheists and agnostics represent a significant portion of the population. It is important to recognize that being a nonbeliever in a divine entity does not mean the individual subscribes to no morality. Indeed, many Nobel Peace Prize winners and other great humanitarians over the centuries would have classified themselves as atheists or agnostics.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO RELIGION:

In studying religion, sociologists distinguish between what they term the experience, beliefs, and rituals of a religion. Religious experience refers to the conviction or sensation that one is connected to “the divine.” This type of communion might be experienced when people are praying or meditating. Religious beliefs are specific ideas that members of a particular faith hold to be true, such as that Jesus Christ was the son of God, or believing in reincarnation. Another illustration of religious beliefs is that different religions adhere to certain stories of world creation. Religious rituals are behaviours or practices that are either required or expected of the members of a particular group, such as bar mitzvah or confession.

Social Functions of Religion:

The structural-functional approach to religion has its roots in Emile Durkheim's work on religion. Durkheim argued that religion is, in a sense, the celebration and even (self-) worship of human society. Given this approach, Durkheim proposed that religion has three major functions in society: it provides social cohesion to help maintain social solidarity through shared rituals and beliefs, social control to enforce religious-based morals and norms to help maintain conformity and control in society, and it offers meaning and purpose to answer any existential questions. Further, Durkheim placed himself in the positivist tradition, meaning that he thought of his study of society as dispassionate and scientific. He was deeply interested in the problem of what held complex modern societies together. Religion, he argued, was an expression of social cohesion.

Religion, for Durkheim, is not imaginary, although he does deprive it of what many believers find essential. Religion is very real; it is an expression of society itself, and indeed, there is no society that does not have religion. We perceive as individuals a force greater than ourselves and give that perception a supernatural face. We then express ourselves religiously in groups, which for Durkheim makes the symbolic power greater. Religion is an expression of our collective consciousness, which is the fusion of all of our individual consciousness, which then creates a reality of its own. It follows, then, that fewer complex societies, such as the Australian Aborigines, have less complex religious systems, involving totems associated with particular clans. The more complex a particular society is, the more complex the religious system. As societies come in contact with other societies, there is a tendency for religious systems to emphasize universalism to a greater and greater extent. However, as the division of labour makes the individual seem more important, religious systems increasingly focus on individual salvation and conscience.

1. Unity: The society to keep its unity requires a strong and beyond materialistic aspects factor. Religion used super materialistic factor, religiosity for the unity of the society. Performing religious rituals in worshipping shows the unity of different groups of any race, language and nationality. Instead of thinking about personal, ethnical and regional benefits, they think about the benefits of the believers in different areas. The believers are brothers. From the Holy Quran, monotheism is not only the unity of Muslims, but also it is the unity of the followers of people of The Book like Jewish and Christianity and ask the of people, monotheism by united be to them Book, come to the world of monotheism which is coming between us and you. Social researches support the role of religion in the unity of the society. A research in Australia showed

that of 310000 people that go to church on Sundays, 24% know their closest friend the people who go to the church. The sociologists emphasized on the role of religion in the social unity. Kent says:” The religion is not only an attempt to determine the reality; it is the unity principle of human being society. The reason is that acceptable beliefs are the best factor of social unity and such acceptable beliefs is found only in religion. Durkheim, the prominent sociologist says: Religious rituals are necessary for correct function of our ethical life that food is required to makes us healthy because via religious rituals, some groups confirm themselves. Robert smith says: religion has two functions. One is regulating the personal behavior for the benevolence of others and the other is motivating the common feeling and social unity. Thus, religious rituals are repetitious expression of unity and functions strengthening social common aspects. Thus, one of the effects and functions of religion is unity and social strength and as the western scientists believe, another factor cannot play such a role.

2. Comfort in life: - Human being in addition to mental comfort requires comfort and wellbeing in materialistic life to attain worship, correct thinking, service to people, attaining science and spiritual positions. The wealthy society is less encountered with tension, because nobody thinks about the other one rights and avoid transgression to the wealth and property of others. Thus, religion doesn't ignore the wellbeing of people and presented some solutions for it and if the followers of religion resort to it, they will attain wellbeing and comfort. From religious point of view, faith and piety are the way of increasing the God blessings. Thus, one of the functions of religion is the wellbeing of materialistic life of people that is attained by faith. Faith and devotion increase the God blessings and in this way all the requirements of the society will be fulfilled.
3. Freedom and social justice: one of the main requirements of human being is justice and freedom in the society because in a society without justice and freedom, there is not progress and growth. The main part of the world is based on justice and a particle of injustice in the world creates imbalance. The important function of religion is freedom and justice. The religious person and a person who believes in the Day of Judgment and its chastisement, observes the rights of others and justice and freedom are at the top. Atheist person knows the life only in this world and he doesn't believe in the Day of Judgment and try to transgress the others. Divine messengers tried a lot to fulfil the freedom and justice in the society. In religious sources, there are many verses

and traditions and observing them fulfils the principle of freedom and justice in the society. According to religious teaching, the people in the society should know themselves responsible and, in the devotion, honesty should be revealed to fight against oppression and respect the ethical values and be as the members of a body united. What fulfills these affairs are only religious faith that penetrates devotion to the depth of human being and validates the ethical values and cause that the courage of fighting against oppression results into martyrdom and by united principle relates all the members of the society. Thus, the teaching of Messengers, the final religion and is not distorted, is the cause of freedom and justice of human being. The religious learning not only prevents use of being good to others but also we can be good to other people that don't have the same religion and encourage use to establish justice about them.

4. Helping others: Different religions are agreed about ethical issues. For example, all the religions advise their followers this point: behave with others as you like them to behave with you. Regarding helping the weak, poor and helpless people such agreement is observed. Sacrifice and selflessness are encouraged in religion. Religious people helped the poor people and advised the others to do the same. Religious institutions and religious people help the poor. Charity boxes were always in the mosques and most of the needy people are helped via these boxes. Some researches in Europe and America showed that there is positive correlation between religiosity and helping the poor and charity and the collaboration of religious people is high in this regard. Islam as the last religion has a valuable position in helping others.
5. Reduction of crime and deviations: One of the signs of religiosity is less crime. It is expected of religious people to less commit crime and this expectation is due to religious learning about the murder, drugs abuse, alcohol, and other deviations. When a person is familiar with religious learning, cannot commit crime and go astray. On the other hand, a person due to religiosity and assurance and not loving this world, controlled anger and joy that are the source of many deviations thus he is not motivated to do these deviations. Thus, religion is a part of social control system. Because people in the society and government are controlled by two methods, first external supervision via punishments, second internal supervision that is fulfilled by religious beliefs and this kind of supervision is less costly and is influential. Indeed, avoiding crimes and deviations is not possible without religiosity because these crimes

are mostly related to ethical issues and ethical issues without the support of religion are not valid. Thus, nothing except religion cannot create resorting to ethical issues and avoiding crime and deviation. Religiosity avoids sexual perversion because a devout person by avoiding of unlawful look, pervert parties and other desires is not necessary to have illegitimate sexual intercourse and only tries to satisfy himself through legitimate relationship. Suicide is seen less in religious people. The researches clarify this reality. Suicide amount among people who go to church once a week is 11 and for people who go less than 1 time in a week is 29 people. The religion in addition to afterlife salvation has main role in social progress.

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Asceticism and Accumulation: - Asceticism, (from Greek *askeō*: “to exercise,” or “to train”), the practice of the denial of physical or psychological desires in order to attain a spiritual ideal or goal. Hardly any religion has been without at least traces or some features of asceticism. It is a lifestyle characterized by abstinence from sensual pleasures, often for the purpose of pursuing spiritual goals. Ascetics may withdraw from the world for their practices or continue to be part of their society, but typically adopt a frugal lifestyle, characterised by the renunciation of material possessions and physical pleasures, and also spend time fasting while concentrating on the practice of religion or reflection upon spiritual matters.

Asceticism has been historically observed in many religious traditions, including Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, and contemporary practices continue amongst some religious followers.

The practitioners of this philosophy abandon sensual pleasures and lead an abstinent lifestyle, in the pursuit of redemption, salvation or spirituality. Asceticism is seen in the ancient theologies as a journey towards spiritual transformation, where the simple is sufficient, the bliss is within, the frugal is plenty. Inversely, several ancient religious traditions, such as Zoroastrianism, Ancient Egyptian religion, and the Dionysian Mysteries, as well as more modern Left-Hand traditions, openly reject ascetic practices and focus on various types of hedonism.

The adjective "ascetic" derives from the ancient Greek term *askēsis*, which means "training" or "exercise". The original usage did not refer to [self-denial](#), but to the physical training required for [athletic](#) events. Its usage later extended to rigorous

practices used in many major religious traditions, in varying degrees, to attain redemption and higher spirituality.

Dom Cuthbert **Butler** classified asceticism into natural and unnatural forms: "Natural asceticism" involves a **lifestyle** which reduces material aspects of life to the utmost simplicity and to a minimum. This may include minimal, simple clothing, sleeping on a floor or in caves, and eating a simple minimal amount of food. Natural asceticism, state Wimbush and Valantasis, does not include maiming the body or harsher austerities that make the body suffer.

"Unnatural asceticism", in contrast, covers practices that go further, and involves body mortification, punishing one's own flesh, and habitual self-infliction of pain, such as by sleeping on a bed of nails.

The Origins of Asceticism.

The origins of asceticism lie in man's attempts to achieve various ultimate goals or ideals: development of the "whole" person, human creativity, ideas, the "self," or skills demanding technical proficiency. Athletic *askēsis* ("training"), involving the ideal of bodily fitness and excellence, was developed to ensure the highest possible degree of physical fitness in an athlete. Among the ancient Greeks, athletes preparing for physical contests (*e.g.*, the Olympic Games) disciplined their bodies by abstaining from various normal pleasures and by enduring difficult physical tests. In order to achieve a high proficiency in the skills of warfare, warriors also adopted various ascetical practices. The ancient Israelites, for example, abstained from sexual intercourse before going into battle.

As values other than those concerned with physical proficiency were developed, the concept expressed by *askēsis* and its cognates was applied to other ideals—*e.g.*, mental facility, moral vitality, and spiritual ability. The ideal of training for a physical goal was converted to that of attaining wisdom or mental prowess by developing and training intellectual faculties. Among the Greeks such training of the intellect led to the educational system of the Sophists— itinerant teachers, writers, and lecturers of the 5th and 4th centuries BC who instructed in return for fees. Another change in the concept of *askēsis* occurred in ancient Greece when the notion of such training was applied to the realm of ethics in the ideal of the sage who is able to act freely to choose or refuse a desired object or an act of physical pleasure. This kind of *askēsis*, involving training the will against a life of sensual pleasure, was exemplified by the Stoics_(ancient Greek philosophers who advocated the control of the emotions by reason).

The view that one ought to deny one's lower desires—understood as sensuous, or bodily—in contrast with one's spiritual desires and virtuous aspirations, became a central principle in ethical thought. Plato believed that it is necessary to suppress bodily desires so that the soul can be free to search for knowledge. This view was also propounded by Plotinus, a Greek philosopher of the 3rd century AD and one of the founders of Neoplatonism, a philosophy concerned with hierarchical levels of reality. The Stoics, among whom asceticism was primarily a discipline to achieve control over the promptings of the emotions, upheld the dignity of human nature and the wise man's necessary imperturbability, which they believed would become possible through the suppression of the affective, or appetitive, part of man.

In a similar manner, the value of asceticism in strengthening an individual's will and his deeper spiritual powers has been a part of many religions and philosophies throughout history. The 19th-century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, for example, advocated a type of asceticism that annihilates the will to live; his fellow countryman and earlier contemporary, the philosopher Immanuel Kant, held to a moral asceticism for the cultivation of virtue according to the maxims of the Stoics. Many factors were operative in the rise and cultivation of religious asceticism: the fear of hostile influences from the demons; the view that one must be in a state of ritual purity as a necessary condition for entering into communion with the supernatural; the desire to invite the attention of divine or sacred beings to the self-denial being practiced by their suppliants; the idea of earning pity, compassion, and salvation by merit because of self-inflicted acts of ascetical practices; the sense of guilt and sin that prompts the need for atonement; the view that asceticism is a means to gain access to supernatural powers; and the power of dualistic concepts that have been at the source of efforts to free the spiritual part of man from the defilement of the body and physically oriented living.

Among the higher religions (*e.g.*, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity), still other factors became significant in the rise and cultivation of asceticism. These include the realization of the transitory nature of earthly life, which prompts a desire to anchor one's hope in otherworldliness, and the reaction against secularization that is often coupled with a belief that spirituality can best be preserved by simplifying one's mode of life.

Forms of Religious Asceticism.

In all strictly ascetic movements, celibacy has been regarded as the first commandment. Virgins and celibates emerged among the

earliest Christian communities and came to occupy a prominent status. Among the earliest Mesopotamian Christian communities, only the celibates were accepted as full members of the church, and in some religions only celibates have been permitted to be priests (*e.g.*, Aztec religion and Roman Catholicism). Abdication of worldly goods is another fundamental principle. In monastic communities there has been a strong trend toward this ideal. In Christian monasticism this ideal was enacted in its most radical form by Alexander Akoimetos, a founder of monasteries in Mesopotamia (died c. 430). Centuries before the activities of the medieval Western Christian monk [St. Francis of Assisi](#), Alexander betrothed himself to poverty, and through his disciples he expanded his influence in Eastern Christian monasteries. These monks lived from the alms they begged but did not allow the gifts to accumulate and create a housekeeping problem, as occurred among some Western monastic orders, such as the Franciscans. In the East, wandering Hindu ascetics and Buddhist monks also live according to regulations that prescribe a denial of worldly goods.

Abstinence and fasting are by far the most common of all ascetic practices. Among the primitive peoples, it originated, in part, because of a belief that taking food is dangerous, for demonic forces may enter the body while one is eating. Further, some foods regarded as especially dangerous were to be avoided. Fasting connected with religious festivals has very ancient roots. In ancient Greek religion, rejection of meat appeared particularly among the Orphic, a mystical, vegetarian cult; in the cult of Dionysus, the orgiastic god of wine; and among the Pythagoreans, a mystical, numerological cult. Among a number of churches the most important period of fasting in the liturgical year is the 40 days before Easter (Lent), and among Muslims the most important period of fasting is the month of [Ramadān](#). The ordinary fasting cycles, however, did not satisfy the needs of ascetics, who therefore created their own traditions. Among Jewish-Christian circles and Gnostic movements, various regulations regarding the use of vegetarian food were established, and Manichaean monks won general admiration for the intensity of their fasting achievements. Christian authors write of their ruthless and unrelenting fasting, and, between their own monks and the Manichaeans, only the Syrian ascetical virtuosos could offer competition in the practice of asceticism. Everything that could reduce sleep and make the resultant short period of rest as troublesome as possible was tried by Syrian ascetics. In their monasteries Syrian monks tied ropes around their abdomens and were then hung in an awkward position, and some were tied to standing posts.

Personal hygiene also fell under condemnation among ascetics. In the dust of the deserts—where many ascetics made their abodes—and in the blaze of the Oriental sunshine, the abdication of washing was equated with a form of asceticism that was painful to the body. With respect to the prohibition against washing, the Persian prophet Mani seems to have been influenced by those ascetic figures who had been seen since ancient times in India, walking around with their long hair hanging in wild abandonment and dressed in filthy rags, never cutting their fingernails and allowing dirt and dust to accumulate on their bodies. Another ascetic practice, the reduction of movement, was especially popular among the Syrian monks, who were fond of complete seclusion in a cell. The practice of restriction in regard to contact with human beings culminated in solitary confinement in wildernesses, cliffs, frontier areas of the desert, and mountains. In general, any settled dwelling place has been unacceptable to the ascetic mentality, as noted in ascetical movements in many religions.

Psychological forms of asceticism have also been developed. A technique of pain-causing introspection was used by Buddhist ascetics in connection with their practices for meditation. The Syrian Christian theologian St. Ephraem Syrus counselled the monks that meditation on guilt, sin, death, and punishment—*i.e.*, the pre-enactment of the moment before the Eternal Judge—must be carried out with such ardour that the inner life becomes a burning lava that produces an upheaval of the soul and torment of the heart. Syrian monks striving for higher goals created a psychological atmosphere in which continued fear and dread, methodically cultivated, were expected to produce continual tears. Nothing less than extreme self-mortification satisfied the ascetic virtuosos.

Pain-producing asceticism has appeared in many forms. A popular custom was to undergo certain physically exhausting or painful exercises. The phenomena of cold and heat provided opportunities for such experiences. The Hindu [fakirs](#) (ascetics) of India provide most remarkable examples of those seeking painful forms of asceticism. In the earliest examples of such radical forms of self-mortification that appeared in India, the ascetic stared at the sun until he went blind or held up his arms above the head until they withered. Syrian Christian monasticism was also inventive in regard to forms of self-torture. A highly regarded custom involved the use of iron devices, such as girdles or chains, placed around the loins, neck, hands, and feet and often hidden under garments. Pain-producing forms of asceticism include self-laceration, particularly castration, and flagellation (whipping), which emerged as a mass

movement in Italy and Germany during the Middle Ages and is still practiced in parts of Mexico and the southwestern United States.

Variations of asceticism in world religions. In the primitive religions, asceticism in the form of seclusion, physical discipline, and the quality and quantity of food prescribed has played an important role in connection with the puberty rites and rituals of admission to the tribal community. Isolation for shorter or longer periods of time and other acts of asceticism have been imposed on medicine men, since severe self-discipline is regarded as the chief way leading to the control of occult powers. Isolation was and is practiced by young men about to achieve the status of manhood in the Blackfoot and other Indian tribes of the north-western United States. In connection with important occasions, such as funerals and war, taboos (negative restrictive injunctions) involving abstinence from certain food and cohabitation were imposed. For the priests and chiefs these were much stricter. In Hellenistic culture (c. 300 BC–c. AD 300), asceticism in the form of fasting and refraining from sexual intercourse was practiced by communities of a religio-mystical character, including the Orphics and Pythagoreans. A new impetus and fresh approach to ascetic practices (including emasculation) came with the expansion of the Oriental mystery religions (such as the cult of the Great Mother) in the Mediterranean area.

In India, in the late Vedic period (c. 1500 BC–c. 200 BC), the ascetic use of tapas (“heat,” or austerity) became associated with meditation and yoga, inspired by the idea that *tapas* kills sin. These practices were embedded in the Brahmanic (ritualistic Hindu) religion in the *Upaniṣads* (philosophical treatises), and this view of *tapas* gained in importance among the Yogas and the Jainas, adherents of a religion of austerity that broke away from Brahmanic Hinduism. According to Jainism, liberation becomes possible only when all passions have been exterminated. Under the influences of such ascetic views and practices in India, Siddhārtha Gautama himself underwent the experiences of bodily self-mortification in order to obtain spiritual benefits; but since his expectations were not fulfilled, he abandoned them. But his basic tenet, which held that suffering lies in causal relation with desires, promoted asceticism in Buddhism. The portrait of the Buddhist monk as depicted in the *Vinaya* (a collection of monastic regulations) is of one who avoids extreme asceticism in his self-discipline. The kind of monasticism that developed in Hinduism during the medieval period also was moderate. Asceticism generally has no significant place in the indigenous religions of China (Confucianism and Taoism). Only the priests in Confucianism practiced discipline

and abstinence from certain foods during certain periods, and some movements within Taoism observed similar marginally ascetic practices.

Judaism, because of its view that God created the world and that the world (including man) is good, is non-ascetic in character and includes only certain ascetic features, such as fasting for strengthening the efficacy of [prayer](#) and for gaining merit. Though some saw a proof of the holiness of life in some ascetic practices, a fully developed ascetical system of life has remained foreign to Jewish thought, and ascetic trends could, therefore, appear only on the periphery of Judaism. Such undercurrents rose to surface among the [Essenes](#), a monastic sect associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls, who represented a kind of religious order practicing celibacy, poverty, and obedience. The archaeological discovery (1940s) of their community at Qumrān (near the Dead Sea in an area that was a part of Jordan) has thrown new light on such movements in Judaism.

In Zoroastrianism (founded by the Persian prophet Zoroaster, 7th century BC), there is officially no place for asceticism. In the Avesta, the sacred scriptures of Zoroastrianism, fasting and mortification are forbidden, but ascetics were not entirely absent even in Persia.

In Christianity all of the types of asceticism have found realization. In the Gospels asceticism is never mentioned, but the theme of following the historical [Christ](#) gave asceticism a point of departure. An ascetic view of the Christian life is found in the [First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians](#) in his use of the image of the spiritual athlete who must constantly discipline and train himself in order to win the race. Abstinence, fasts, and vigils in general characterized the lives of the early Christians, but some ramifications of developing Christianity became radically ascetic. Some of these movements, such as the Encratites (an early ascetic sect), a primitive form of Syrian Christianity, and the followers of Marcion, played important roles in the history of early Christianity. During the first centuries ascetics stayed in their communities, assumed their role in the life of the church, and centred their views of asceticism on martyrdom and celibacy. Toward the end of the 3rd century, monasticism originated in Mesopotamia and Egypt and secured its permanent form in cenobitism (communal monasticism). After the establishment of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire (after AD 313), monasticism was given a new impetus and spread all over the Western world. In Roman Catholicism new orders were founded on a large scale. Though asceticism was rejected by the leaders of the Protestant Reformation, certain forms of asceticism did emerge in Calvinism, Puritanism, Pietism, early Methodism, and the Oxford

Movement (an Anglican movement of the 19th century espousing earlier ecclesiastical ideals). Related to asceticism is the Protestant work_etic, which consists of a radical requirement of accomplishment symbolized in achievement in one's profession and, at the same time, demanding strict renunciation of the enjoyment of material gains acquired legitimately.

The adherents of [Islām](#) in its beginnings knew only fasting, which was obligatory in the month of Ramaḍān. Monasticism is rejected in the Qur'ān (the Islāmic sacred scripture). Yet ascetic forces among Christians in Syria and Mesopotamia, vigorous and conspicuous, were able to exercise their influence and were assimilated by Islām in the ascetic movement known as *zuhd* (self-denial) and later in that of [Sūfism](#), a mystical movement that arose in the 8th century and incorporated ascetic ideals and methods.

Relationship between religion and socio-economic action:

One of the most enduring debates in social science concerns the role of religion in society. This is reflected by concerns about how post-Cold War international relations might be marked by a 'clash of civilizations', early 20th century concerns about the compatibility of Catholicism and liberal democracy, and contemporary concerns about the compatibility of Islam and western culture, which have almost certainly played a role in the rise of right-wing populist parties in many western countries. For economists, however, it is the relationship between religion and economic performance that is of prime concern, and arguments have been made both for and against different religions and their negative or positive contribution to comparative economic development.

The most famous work on how religion might impact on economic growth came from Max Weber, who argued for the idea of a 'Protestant ethic'. Observing that the predominantly Protestant north of Europe was richer than the predominantly Catholic south, Weber hypothesised that this could be traced back to Protestantism's promotion of the virtues of hard work and thrift. As a consequence, he believed, Protestants worked harder than their Catholic counterparts, and saved more – facilitating the rise of capitalism in Western Europe. The theory remains controversial till today, although it has recently been argued, using data from Prussia, that it was Luther's idea that Christians should be able to read the Bible and the consequential impact on human capital accumulation, rather than a Protestant ethic as such, that was the real reason why Protestants performed better than Catholics in that particular setting.

Nevertheless, a religion or religious order promoting hard work and thrift could surely have an impact on economic development through cultural change, and our paper (Andersen et al. 2017) argues that such influence was indeed exerted by the Catholic Order of the Cistercians, which spread around Europe from the 11th century. The Order, an offshoot of the Benedictines, was established in 1098 in France with the aim of returning to a literal observance of the ‘rule of St. Benedict’. Unlike their Benedictine cousins, who had softened their observance over time, the Cistercians aimed to return to an austere life of hard manual labour and restraint from consumption. Thus, the values that Weber was to associate with Protestantism had in fact already been promulgated several centuries later.

As a direct consequence of the austere life they promoted, Cistercian monasteries became rich and successful. Thus, a tribute to their contribution to the landscape was made by the famous poet William Wordsworth: “Where’r they rise, the sylvan waste retires, And aery harvests crown the fertile lea”. The Cistercians made important advances in breeding and agriculture, perhaps most important by consolidating their land in ‘granges’ rather than the typical unenclosed village holdings of the time. Moreover, monasteries also made significant use of water power for a range of industrial activities. Importantly for our work, their teachings and practices spread beyond the walls of the monastery both to so-called lay brothers, illiterate peasants who followed a less demanding form of Cistercian life and worked the land, and to other secular labourers they employed, as well as to settled communities that formed around the monasteries.

Our analysis therefore begins with a simple theoretical model, which lays out how Cistercian values might have propagated from this initially small group of people ‘beyond the walls’. Prior to the fertility transition, the economic success they enjoyed translated into reproductive success. Parents passed on Cistercian values to their children, who also enjoyed higher economic and reproductive success. In this manner, Cistercian values would eventually come to dominate society. Our model suggests that this might plausibly have happened within the space of just five centuries, although small initial differences in the Cistercian influence would also have led to considerable local variation in cultural values.

Some researchers argue that explanations for economic growth should be broadened to include cultural determinants. Culture may influence economic outcomes by affecting such personal traits as honesty, thrift, willingness to work hard, and openness to strangers. Although religion is an important dimension of culture, economists to date have paid little attention to its role in economic growth.

But in *Religion and Economic Growth*, authors Robert Barro and Rachel McCleary analyse the influences of religious participation and beliefs on a country's rate of economic progress. The authors use six international surveys conducted between 1981 and 1999 to measure religiosity -- church attendance and religious beliefs -- for 59 countries. There is more information available about rich countries than poor ones and about countries that are primarily Christian. Barro and McCleary consider first how religiosity responds to economic development, government influences on religion, and the composition of religious adherence. They find that their measures of religiosity are positively related to education, negatively related to urbanization, and positively related to the presence of children. Overall, religiosity tends to decline with economic development.

The presence of a state religion is positively related to religiosity, probably because of the subsidies that flow to established religions in those countries. However, religiosity declines with greater government regulation of religion and with the religious oppression associated with Communism. Greater diversity of religions -- that is, religious pluralism -- is associated with higher church attendance and stronger religious beliefs. Countries in the sample that had low levels of pluralism include some that are predominantly Catholic (Spain, Italy, Portugal, Belgium, Ireland, and much of Latin America), as well as Protestant Scandinavia, Orthodox Greece, and Muslim Pakistan and Turkey. Countries studied that exhibit high levels of pluralism include the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, and South Africa.

The authors turn next to the assessment of how differences in religiosity affect economic growth. For given religious beliefs, increases in church attendance tend to reduce economic growth. In contrast, for given church attendance, increases in some religious beliefs -- notably heaven, hell, and an afterlife -- tend to increase economic growth. In other words, economic growth depends mainly on the extent of believing relative to belonging. The authors also find some indication that the fear of hell is more potent for economic growth than the prospect of heaven. Their statistical analysis allows them to argue that these estimates reflect causal influences from religion to economic growth and not the reverse.

Barro and McCleary suggest that higher rates of religious beliefs stimulate growth because they help to sustain aspects of individual behaviour that enhance productivity. They believe that higher church attendance depresses growth because it signifies a greater use of resources by the religion sector. However, that suppression

of growth is tempered by the extent to which church attendance leads to greater religious beliefs, which in turn encourages economic growth.

Religion and Economy (Max Weber): -

Religion being a pervasive and universal institution is deeply rooted in human beings. It is not just a strict institution but also exerts a tremendous influence upon all other institutions. Many sociologists and anthropologists were fascinated by the mystic side of religion. Weber therefore was no exception.

What Weber was concerned within the sociology of religion was not religion on everyday life, on political, administrative, economic and moral behaviour in different historical situations that he tried to understand and reduces to order. His study says that religion which is based on cultural needs of man has now added new dimensions to human life and human development.

Weber suggested that the protestant institution and its ethics have played an important role in the development of their economy. This idea of weber has been beautifully described in his highly acclaimed book, "Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism" (1905). In the book Weber gives a prolong description of his kind of religion.

Before writing the book, he separated his role as a scientist from that of a publicist. His visit to America gave him an opportunity to understand and to observe first hand, some aspects of capitalism, labour relations and the protestant ethics in practice. Weber therefore termed his work as a factual refutation of the materialistic conception of history.

The Sociology of religion by Weber is a piece with all his sociology. His study promulgates that how far a particular sect of religion can influence the economic behaviour of its followers. Weber's main concern was to what extent religious conception of the world of existence have influenced the economic behaviour of various societies and specially the western society. Weber says that Calvinist sect of protestant Christian religion has strongest influences on the development of capitalism.

The theory also captures several significant socio-economic influences which distinguish western from the eastern characteristics. He also embarked upon, through the "method of difference", a comparative survey of the relation of economic ethics of world religions to economic life, and to underline "those elements of the economic ethics of the western religion which differentiate them from others."

Weber desired to delineate the uniqueness of western capitalism and the values and interests given to its peculiar structures and dynamics.

Weber examines this connection from two points of view:

1. The influence of these religious doctrines on economy.
2. The position of the groups in the economic system.

He was less concerned with the ethical doctrines as expounded by the theologians than with these doctrines in their popular form as they guide their (group) behaviour. He wanted to comprehend capitalism as a civilization. The civilization of modern man. What motivated Weber the most is the primary orientation to the attainment of profit in nominally peaceful system of exchange relationship.

One of the major reasons behind Weber's theory was the result of his endeavor to undertake a distinct and independent theoretical analysis of the social and political issues and his dissatisfaction with both Marxism and German historical economics and jurisprudence to solve these problems.

Religion:

By the term "religion" we mean a set of ideas and beliefs about the "supernatural" and its impact on the lives of human beings. Human beings have always been confronted with certain problems and crises which seem to defy logical explanation. Religious beliefs give meaning to life. They provide certain guidelines of behaviour, certain codes of conduct with individuals are expected to follow.

Economy:

In order that society may survive, certain basic physical needs have to be met. Food, clothing and shelter are essential for life. The economy or economic system refers to those arrangements made by society for the production, consumption and distribution of goods and services.

Inter-relationship between Religious Ethics and Economy:

Superficially, Religion and society seem poles apart. Religion concerns itself with the beyond, whereas economy deals with the practical business of working, producing and consuming. Are these two seemingly diverse systems related? Max Weber thought so.

According to him, it was the ideas, beliefs, values and world view of human societies that guided the way their members acted, even in the economic sphere. Religion prescribes certain guidelines of behaviour. It is in accordance with these guidelines that followers direct or orient their activities. These guidelines are incorporated in the body of religious ethics of each religious system. Let us illustrate Weber's view with an example from our society.

"A health expert might suggest that if Indians would eat beef, the problem of hunger and malnutrition might be lessened. But the very idea of cow-slaughter is revolting to

most Hindus and would probably be rejected outright. So even though cow-slaughter may seem economically rational or logical, values and ideas (in this case, the idea that the cow is sacred) definitely influence the making of certain decisions. It is our beliefs and values which helps to shape our behaviour.”

It was this link between religious belief and economic behaviour that Weber tried to bring out in his work.

Weber's Comparative Studies on Religion:

Weber tries to establish relation between religious ethics on the one hand and the economic behaviour on the other. Weber also tries to substantiate or validate this idea with the help of comparative studies of various world religions. Weber studies Confucianism in Ancient China, Hinduism in ancient India and Judaism in ancient Palestine (West Asia).

Confucianism in China:

Ancient China had a well-developed economy. Trade, commerce, finance and manufacture were quite advanced. Despite the presence of these material conditions, western-style of capitalism did not develop there. Because according to Weber, the Confucian ethic would not permit this.

Confucian ideas can be summed up as follows:

- (i) Belief in the order of the universe, the cosmos.
- (ii) Man should aim at being in harmony with nature and the cosmos.
- (iii) Behaviour is to be guided by tradition. All wisdom lies in the past.
- (iv) Family and kin ties and obligations were never to be neglected.

The stress on harmony, traditionalism and family obligations are quite contradictory to the relentless pursuit of profit for its own sake. Indeed, the spirit of capitalism would probably have been considered to be bad manners.

Judaism in West Asia:

This is the religion of the Jews who originally inhabited the land of Palestine in West Asia. Judaism is the oldest of the monotheistic religions—a religion that speaks of one, all powerful and Almighty God. The Jews believed themselves to be the chosen ones of God or “Jahweh”.

Their prophets united them in the belief that they were the chosen ones of God and must help to establish God's Kingdom on Earth. Judaism unlike Confucianism and Hinduism speak of an ethic of mastery over the environment, not harmony.

Weber says, Judaism could have generated the spirit of capitalism. However certain historical forces prevented this. The Exodus or mass migration of the Jews from their

homeland due to persecution left them scattered all over the world. Their economic participation was restricted to money lending, which they did very successfully.

Hinduism in India:

Weber expressed a strictly negative attitude, while dealing with the Religion-of India towards the possibility of rational capitalism existing within the ethos of Hinduism. To him, it is extremely unlikely that the organization of modern capitalism could have originated in a caste-based society like India. Nor could capitalism imported from the west, hope to flourish in India.

India like China was economically fairly advanced. Ancient India made valuable contributions to science. Trade links were established in various parts of the world. But according to Weber, Hinduism did not provide a suitable ethic for the development of capitalism. The idea of 'Dharma', 'Karma', "punarjanma" made Indians defeatists and fatalists.

Since one's present condition is believed to be the consequence of past deeds, Weber feels that Hindus have no motivation to improve their economic condition. Weber says, Hindus would not consider it worthwhile to put in the sort of hard-work that capitalism demanded.

Hinduism preaches other-worldly asceticism. The material world is de-emphasized. Material prosperity is not given importance as it is temporary and illusory. It is the welfare of the soul or 'atma' which is imperishable, immortal is more important in Hinduism. Religions that place more stress on otherworldly asceticism and de-emphasis the material world can hardly foster attitudes that promote Capitalism. Mere material conditions like trade, technology and finance are not enough to promote capitalism. India and China had both of these, yet the value systems of these societies were such that the pursuit of wealth for own sake and rational organisation of work to achieve this purpose did not make sense. It did not fit in with the ethos or the ideals of these societies.

Weber's study of Religions has its merits:

According to Raymond Aron, the study of Weber has its own merits. Among which the followings may be noted.

(i) Weber never attempted to establish any kind of causality as such. In his study nowhere had he claimed that the protestant ethic (i.e. Calvinist ethic) was the sole cause of the rise of capitalism. Weber interpreted Protestantism in one way but he did not rule out other kinds of interpretations. He required only the totality of interpretations.

(ii) Weber could make, “the affinity between a religious attitude and an economic commandment credible.”

(iii) He has raised a sociological problem of considerable importance; the influence of world views upon social organisation or individual organisations.

(iv) It is not right to say that Weber maintained a thesis exactly opposite to Marx's. It means Weber never explained “the economy in terms of religion instead of religion in terms of the economy.”

Criticisms:

Weber says, “Only specialists are allowed to comment on my theory;” which expounds his immensity as a sociologist. Weber himself has focused on some of the limitation of his theory.

(i) He says that his protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism might not be the idealist position. He therefore says that although the world is what the people's thought make of it but the ideas do need economic motive for a certain sect to progress.

(ii) He also says that he is presenting just one side of the coin, the other side of the material interest and socio-economic situation of Europe is still there that he has not spoke about.

(iii) Weber's study went wrong in certain respects. It is certainly possible that Weber was wrong about the origin of capitalism. Capitalism did not occur in some Calvinist societies. It sometimes occurred in non-Calvinist societies. England, the birth place of the Industrial Revolution was not Calvinist, Scotland which was Calvinist failed to develop early capitalism.

Weber's thoughts on rationalization and various other issues are illustrated in his work on the relationship between religion and capitalism. At one level, this is a series of studies of the relationship between religious ideas and the development of the spirit of capitalism. At another level,- it is a study of how the west developed a distinctively rational religious system (Calvinism) that played a key role in the rise of a rational economic system (Capitalism).

Weber also studied other societies in which he found- religious systems (for example, Confucianism, Judaism, Hinduism etc.) that inhibit the growth of a rational economic system. It is this kind of majestic sweep over the history of many sectors of the world that helps give weberian theory its enduring significance.