









Religion/Sect / Belief System	Origins & History	Adherents Worldwide (approx.)	God(s) and Universe	Human Situation and Life's Purpose	Afterlife	Practices	Texts
Atheism	Appears throughout history (including ancient Greek philosophy), but especially after the Enlightenment (19th cent).	1.1 billion (this figure includes agnostic and non-religious, which tend to be grouped on surveys)	There is no God or divine being. Beliefs about the universe usually based on latest scientific findings.	Since there is no afterlife, this one life is of great importance. Only humans can help themselves and each other solve the world's problems.	none	none	Influential works include those by Marx, Freud, Feuerbach, and Voltaire. Notable modern authors include Richard Dawkins and Carl Sagan.
<u>Buddhism</u> 	Founded by <u>Siddharta Gautama</u> (the Buddha) in c. 520 BC, NE India.	360 million	Varies: Theravada atheistic; Mahayana more polytheistic. Buddha taught nothing is permanent.	Purpose is to <u>avoid suffering</u> and gain enlightenment and release from cycle of rebirth, or at least attain a better rebirth by gaining merit.	Reincarnation (understood differently than in Hinduism, with no surviving soul) until gain enlightenment	Meditation, mantras, devotion to deities (in some sects), mandalas (Tibetan)	Tripitaka (Pali Canon); Mahayana sutras like the Lotus Sutra; others.
<u>Chinese Religion</u> 	Indigenous folk religion of China.	394 million	Dualistic <u>yin and yang</u> ; mythological beings and folk deities.	Purpose is a favorable life and peaceful afterlife, attained through rituals and <u>honoring of ancestors</u> .	<u>Judgment, then reincarnation</u> or temporary hell until gain a Buddhist-type paradise.	Ancestor worship, prayer, longevity practices, divination, prophecy and astrology, feng shui.	None
<u>Confucianism</u> 	Founded by Confucius (551–479 BC), China	5-6 million	Not addressed	Purpose of life is to fulfill one's role in society with propriety, honor, and loyalty.	Not addressed	Honesty, politeness, propriety, humaneness, perform correct role in society, loyalty to family, nation	Analects
<u>Christianity (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox)</u> 	Founded by Jesus Christ in c. 30 AD, Israel.	2 billion	One God who is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit	All have sinned and are thereby separated from God. Salvation is through faith in Christ and, for some, sacraments and good works.	Eternal heaven or hell (or temporary purgatory).	Prayer, Bible study, baptism, Eucharist (Communion), church on Sundays, numerous holidays.	The Bible (Old and New Testaments)
<u>Hinduism</u>	Indigenous religion of India as	900 million	One Supreme Reality	Humans are in bondage to ignorance and	Reincarnation until gain enlightenment	Yoga, meditation, worship	The Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad

	<p>developed to present day.</p>		<p>(Brahman) manifested in many gods and goddesses</p>	<p>illusion, but are able to escape. Purpose is to gain release from rebirth, or at least a better rebirth.</p>	<p>t.</p>	<p>(puja), devotion to a god or goddess, pilgrimage to holy cities, live according to one's dharma (purpose/role).</p>	<p>Gita, Ramayana, etc.</p>
<p><u>Islam</u></p> 	<p>Muhammad, 622 AD, Saudi Arabia</p>	<p>1.3 billion (Sunni: 940 million)</p>	<p>One God (Allah in Arabic)</p>	<p>Humans must submit (islam) to the will of God to gain Paradise after death.</p>	<p>Paradise or Hell.</p>	<p>Five Pillars: Faith, Prayer, Alms, Pilgrimage, Fasting. Mosque services on Fridays. Ablutions before prayer. No alcohol or pork. Holidays related to the pilgrimage and fast of Ramadan.</p>	<p>Qur'an (Scripture); Hadith (tradition)</p>
<p><u>Judaism</u></p> 	<p>The religion of the Hebrews (c. 1300 BC), especially after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD.</p>	<p>14 million</p>	<p>One God, Yahweh (YHVH).</p>	<p>Obey God's commandments, live ethically. Focus is more on this life than the next.</p>	<p>Not historically emphasized. Beliefs vary from no afterlife to shadowy existence to the World to Come (similar to heaven).</p>	<p>Circumcision at birth, bar/bat mitzvah at adulthood. Synagogue services on Saturdays. No pork or other non-kosher foods. Holidays related to historical events.</p>	<p>Bible (Tanakh), Talmud</p>
<p><u>Taoism</u></p> 	<p>Lao-Tzu, c. 550 BC, China.</p>	<p>20 million (394 million adherents of Chinese religion)</p>	<p>Pantheism - the Tao pervades all. Yin-yang - opposites make up a unity.</p>	<p>Purpose is inner harmony, peace, and longevity. Achieved by living in accordance with the Tao.</p>	<p>Revert back to state of non-being, which is simply the other side of being.</p>	<p>General attitude of detachment and non-struggle, "go with the flow" of the Tao. Tai-chi, acupuncture, and alchemy to help longevity.</p>	<p>Tao Te Ching, Chuang-Tzu</p>



Hinduism

The name **Hinduism** was invented by us Europeans for Indian religion.

In reality it does not denote a single Indian religion but a whole cluster of religions, a confederation of religions, Indians themselves usually call their religion **eternal order**.

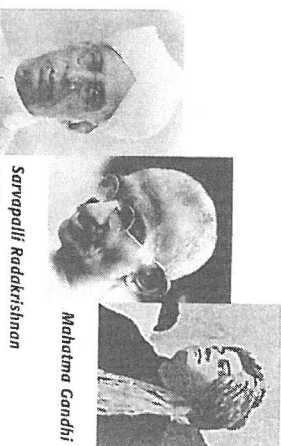
In Sanskrit, the old classical language of India, this is *Sanatana dharma* – a term which was very often used by Mahatma Gandhi. This central concept of **dharma** determines everything: it means order, the law, obligation.

Order here is not a legal order but an all-embracing cosmic order which governs all life. All men and women, regardless of the caste or class to which they belong, are to observe it.

Here we are reminded of something like the **fundamental ethic** that can already be found among the Aboriginal people in Australia, a fundamental order which is there from the start, right from the beginning.



Shiva



Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

Mahatma Gandhi

Vivekananda

But here already it is also clear that Hinduism is not primarily a matter of statements of faith, dogmas, orthodoxy. Hinduism has no official doctrinal authority, but is about right action, the correct rite, morality – everything that makes up the practice of religion.

Hinduism is not primarily about specific rights either. It is about our great human destiny, the responsibilities that we have: responsibilities towards family, society, God and the gods.



A Hindu's FOUR CLASSIC AIMS IN LIFE
Striving for what is pleasant and the delight of the senses (*Kama*),
Striving for what is useful and attaining prosperity (*artha*)
Working for justice and virtue (*dharma*).
Striving for liberation and redemption (*moksha*) from the cycle of birth, death and reincarnation.

The seven modern

- SOCIAL SINS of humankind**
 - Politics without principles
 - Business without morality
 - Wealth without work
 - Education without character
 - Science without humanity
 - Enjoyment without conscience
 - Religion without sacrifice
- (according to Mahatma Gandhi)

Virtues of the YOGA WAY

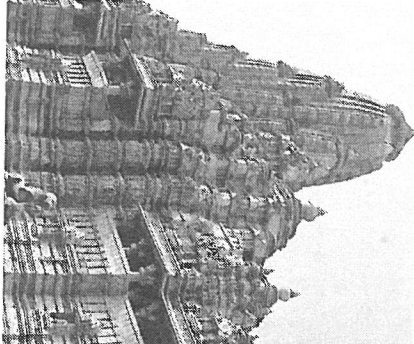
- Non violence, doing no harm (*a-himsa*)
 - Truthfulness (*satya*)
 - Not stealing (*a-steya*)
 - Chastity, purity of life (*brahmacharya*)
 - Lack of desire (*a-parigraha*)
- (according to Patanjali)

- ▶ The union of hearts and minds and freedom from hate. I will bring you.
 - ▶ Love one another as the cow loves the calf that she has borne.
 - ▶ Let son be loyal to father and of one mind with his mother.
 - ▶ Let not a brother hate a brother, nor a sister hate a sister; unanamous, united in aims speak your words in friendliness.
- (Atharva Veda 5:30)

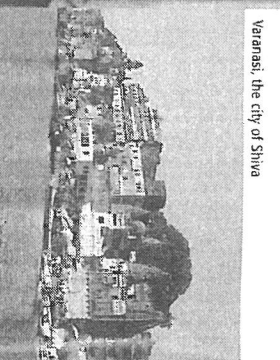
Truth, self-control, asceticism, generosity, non-violence, constancy in virtue – these are the means of success, and not caste or family.
(from the Mahabharata)

One should not take what belongs to others, that is an eternal duty.
(from the Mahabharata)

- ▶ One should speak the truth and speak it pleasingly.
 - ▶ One should not speak the truth in an unpleasant manner nor should one speak untruth because it is pleasing; this is the eternal law.
- (Akana Smriti 4: 128)



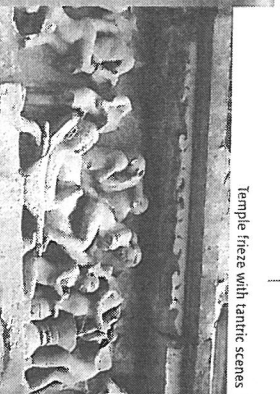
Kandariya Mahadev temple, Kiranjuraho



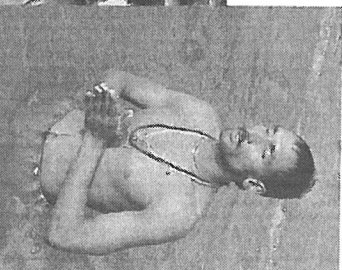
Varanasi, the city of Shiva



A Vishnavite priest



Temple frieze with tantic scenes



Morning prayer in the Ganges

Hinduism

Brahman

According to the monistic/panentheistic theologies of Hinduism, Brahman (the greater Self or God) is in the highest sense One and nondifferentiated from the world and its beings (hence 'nondualist'). In connoting Brahman's absolutely unparalleled nature, it is also called *Parambrahman*, where the Sanskrit prefix *param-* denotes "ultimate". Brahman is also sometimes seen as synonymous with the concept of *Paramatma* (Supreme Spirit). Beyond time and space, both immanent and transcendent,^{[11][12]} *Brahman* is often described succinctly as *sacchidananda*, meaning 'Truth-Consciousness-Bliss', not only possessing the qualities but also being their very essence. Advaita philosophy declares that ultimately Brahman (the impersonal God) is beyond mere intellectual description and can be understood only through direct spiritual experience, where the 'knower' and the 'known' are subsumed into the act of 'knowing'. The goal is to "wake up" and realize that one's atman, or soul, is really identical to Brahman, the uber-soul.^{[13][14]}

On the other hand, monotheistic (typically Dvaita Vedanta) and related devotional (bhakti) schools, understand Brahman as a Supreme Being who possesses personality. In these conceptions, Brahman is associated with Vishnu, Shiva or Shakti depending on the sect. Brahman is seen as fundamentally separate from its reliant souls (humanity) so, in achieving liberation, individual beings experience God as an independent being, a living personality, and retain their individual identities.

Atman

Most Hindus believe that the spirit or soul, the true "self" of every person, called the ātman, is eternal;^[25] as is Brahman, which may be seen as either the greater Self or as God, depending on the outlook. According to the Advaita (non-dualist) schools of philosophy, the individual self and greater Self are not fundamentally distinct. They argue that the core spirit, or "Self", of every individual person is identical with the greater Spirit. Referring to 'brahman' unequivocally as God may reveal problems of semantics, where certain traditions understand God to be a motivating agency with personality and others that it is without personality and form, beyond any sort of definition and thus non-equivalent to the 'God' as understood by dualist schools of Hinduism or Abrahamic understandings of God.^[25] According to the Upanishads, whoever gains insight into the depths of his own nature and becomes fully aware of the ātman as the innermost core of his own Self will realize his identity with Brahman and will thereby reach Moksha.^{[25][26]} According to the Dvaita (dualist) school, (often associated with Vaishnavism), the ātman is not identical with Brahman, which is seen as being God with personality (though not limited); instead, the ātman is dependent on God. Moksha depends on the cultivation of love for God and on God's grace.

The Basis of the Caste and Class System

When you study the Hindu religion, you'll discover that it recognizes four distinct stages in a person's life. Basically, these stages translate to student, householder, retirement and ascetism. Indian society in general was divided into four classes, which are referred to as Varnas. These four classes consist of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Starting at the top and working towards the bottom of the classes, the Brahmins consist of priests and teachers. Next in line are the Kshatriyas, which consist of kings, nobles and warriors. The Vaishyas are further down the class system, consisting of businessmen, merchants and farmers. The Shudras, which consist of laborers and servants, are at the bottom of the class hierarchy. Over time, these classes evolved into today's rigid caste system. Although there have been numerous reform movements throughout the 19th century and continuing into the early 20th century, the caste and class systems are still quite central to India's society. Although the more liberal nature of today's modern Hinduism has tempered this caste and class system somewhat, it's still an extremely important factor in the average India citizen's life. These factors tend to become even more important in areas such as politics, social norms, and marriage.

The Importance of Hierarchy

In India, the overall concept of hierarchy is seen in every kind of relationship. This strict hierarchy system is considered to be absolutely vital to the overall maintenance of social order. For example, teachers are referred to as gurus, and are viewed in schools as the ultimate source of knowledge. In the family, the father is considered to be the family's leader. In the world of business, the boss is viewed as being ultimately responsible. Even in the case of family and friends, hierarchy and social order are extremely important. You'll even find that hierarchy plays a role in the case of total strangers.

Visual Evidence of Social Stratification

If you observe the actions and methods of personal interactions among India citizens, you'll be able to recognize many signs of the class and caste system. Some of these identifying features include the deities that are worshipped, local dialect, names, manner of dress, occupation, and housing location. The social class and caste system also controls who a person will eat with while in public. If you put all these identifying features together, you can often determine where a person and their family rank in the overall hierarchy of India's society.



Islam

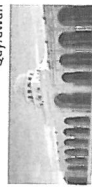
There is no doubt that through the prophet Muhammad the Arabs were raised to the level of an ethical high religion, grounded in belief in the one God and in a **basic ethic of humanity**, with clear imperatives for more humanity and more justice. From its origins onwards, Islam was a religion not so much of the law as of an ethic. And there is also something like the Ten Commandments, the basis of a common ethic of humanity.

Muslims see Muhammad as the **seal of the prophets**, the messenger of God who brought God's final revelation to humankind. However, Muslims attach the greatest importance to the fact that the Prophet Muhammad does not stand at the centre of Islam, as Jesus Christ stands at the centre of Christianity.

For Muslims, the Word of God did not become a man but a **book**. And it is the Qur'an, the original version of which lies with God himself, that forms the centre of Islam.

So Islam is a **religion of the book** par excellence. The Qur'an completes the Torah of the Jews and the Gospel of the Christians. For Muslims it is unsurpassable, perfect, absolutely reliable. So it is also solemnly recited and above all learnt by heart by the experts. Yet Muslim theologians, too, have discussed the question whether as the word of God the Qur'an is not also a human word, the word of the Prophet Muhammad.

Qayrawan



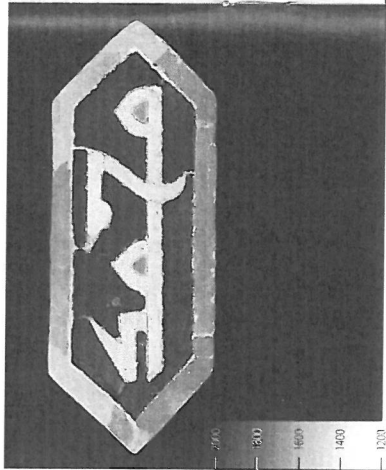
Believers recite the Qur'an



The Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem



'Muhammad'



The QUR'AN

In the Name of God, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate, Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, the All-merciful, the All-compassionate, Master of the Day of Reckoning. These alone do we worship; and to Thee alone do we turn for help. Guide us in the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast blessed, not of those against whom Thou art wrathful, not of those who have incurred Thy wrath. (Qur'an, Surah 1)

The Muslim code of duties

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, Set not up with God another god, or you will sit condemned and forsaken. Thy Lord has decreed you shall not serve any but Him, and be good to parents. And give the kinsman his right, and the needy, and the traveller. And slay not your children for fear of poverty. Nor take life, which God has made sacred. And approach not fornication. And do not touch the property of the orphan. And be true to every promise. And give full measure when you measure, and weigh with the straight balance. And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. And walk not the earth with insolence. (Qur'an, Surah 17:22-38)

And if they incline to peace, you should also incline to it and place your trust in God. (Qur'an, Surah 8:61)

And avoid the abomination of idols, and avoid the speaking of falsehood. (Qur'an, Surah 22:30)

Do you see him who calls the Reckoning a lie? He is the one who casts the orphan away, who fails to urge the feeding of one in need. So woe to those that pray and are heedless of their prayers, to those who make display and refuse charity. (Qur'an, Surah 107:1-7)

Let there be no compulsion in religion. (Qur'an, Surah 2:256)

Let there be one community (of believers), calling to good, and bidding to honour, and forbidding dishonour; those are the prosperers. (Qur'an, Surah 3:104)

O believers, be you securers of justice, witnesses for God. Let not detestation for a people move you to deviate from justice. (Qur'an, Surah 5:8)

Islam means **submission** to the will of God. It is the message of the Prophet **Muhammad**, which was gradually revealed to him in the seventh century by an angel, and was later written down in the Qur'an by Muhammad's companions and followers.

- The **five pillars** of Islam are:
- ▶ belief in God and Muhammad as his messenger,
 - ▶ daily ritual prayer,
 - ▶ obligatory contribution for the poor,
 - ▶ Ramadan, the annual month of fasting,
 - ▶ to go on pilgrimage to Mecca if possible once in a lifetime.

There are around 1.2 billion Muslims; the most important movements are the Sunni and the Shi'ites.

Most Muslims today live in South-East Asia and India, Central Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Turkey.

Gamaladdin al-Afghani



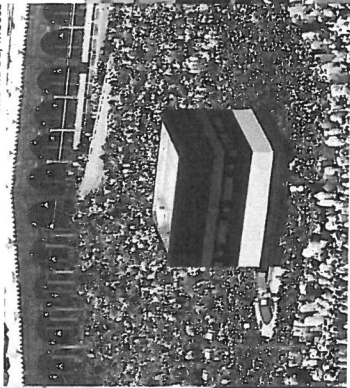
Muhammad Abduh



Muhammad Iqbal



The Ka'ba, Mecca



Daily ritual prayer



1) "Islam" means "Peace through the submission to God". "Muslim" means "anyone or anything that submits itself to the will of God". "Allah" is an Arabic word that means "God". Muslims also believe that "Allah" is the personal name of God.

5) **There are six articles of faith in Islam.** These are the basic beliefs that one must have in order to be considered a true Muslim. They are belief in: A) the One God. B) all the prophets of God. C) the original scriptures revealed to Prophets Moses, David, Jesus, and Muhammad. D) the angels. E) the Day of Judgment and the Hereafter. F) the divine decree (or destiny).

9) Allah is not the God of Muslims only. He is the God of all people and all creation. Just because people refer to God using different terms does not mean that they are different gods. Spanish people refer to God as "Dios" and French people refer to God as "Dieu", yet they are all the same God. Interestingly, most Arab Jews and Arab Christians refer to God as "Allah". And the word Allah in Arabic appears on the walls of many Arab churches.

10) The Islamic concept of God is that He is loving, merciful, and compassionate. But Islam also teaches that He is just and swift in punishment. Nevertheless, Allah once said to Prophet Muhammad, "My mercy prevails over my wrath." Islam teaches a balance between fear and hope, protecting one from both complacency and despair.

12) Muslims believe in and acknowledge all the prophets of old, from Adam to Jesus. Muslims believe that they brought the message of peace and submission (Islam) to different peoples at different times. Muslims also believe that these prophets were "Muslims" because they submitted their wills to God. Muslims accept the original unaltered Torah (the Gospel of Moses) and the original Bible (the Gospel of Jesus) since they were revealed by God. However, none of those original scriptures are in existence today, in their entirety. Therefore, Muslims follow the subsequent, final, and preserved revelation of God, the Holy Qur'an.

15) The Holy Qur'an was not authored by Muhammad. It was authored by God, revealed to Muhammad, and written into physical form by his companions. The Holy Qur'an has no flaws or contradictions. The original Arabic scriptures have never been changed or tampered with.

18) If all Qur'ans in the world today were burned and destroyed, the original Arabic would still remain. This is because millions of Muslims, called Hafiz (or "preservers") have memorized the text letter for letter from beginning to end, every word and syllable. Also, chapters from the Qur'an are precisely recited from memory by every Muslim in each of the five daily prayers.

19) Muslims do not believe in the concept of "vicarious atonement" but rather believe in the law of personal responsibility. Islam teaches that each person is responsible for his or her own actions. On the Day of Judgment Muslims believe that every person will be resurrected and will have to answer to God for their every word, thought, and deed. Consequently, a practicing Muslim is always striving to be righteous.

21) Terrorism, unjustified violence and the killing of innocent people are absolutely forbidden in Islam. Islam is a way of life that is meant to bring peace to a society, whether its people are Muslim or not. The extreme actions of those who claim to be Muslim may be, among other things, a result of their ignorance or uncontrolled anger. Tyrant rulers and those who commit acts of terrorism in the name of Islam are simply not following Islam. These people are individuals with their own views and political agendas. Fanatical Muslims are no more representative of the true Islamic teachings than Timothy McVeigh or David Koresh are of Christianity. Extremism and fanaticism is a problem that is common to all religious groups. Anyone who thinks that all Muslims are terrorists should remember that the famous boxer Muhammad Ali, perhaps the most celebrated person of our era, is a practicing Muslim.

22) The word "jihad" does not mean "holy war". Instead, it means the inner struggle that one endures in trying to submit their will to the will of God. Some Muslims may say they are going for "jihad" when fighting in a war to defend themselves or their fellow Muslims, but they only say this because they are conceding that it will be a tremendous struggle. But there are many other forms of jihad which are more relevant to the everyday life of a Muslim such as the struggles against laziness, arrogance, stinginess, or the struggle against a tyrant ruler or against the temptation of Satan, or against one's own ego, etc.

23) Women are not oppressed in Islam. Any Muslim man that oppresses a woman is not following Islam. Among the many teachings of Prophet Muhammad that protected the rights and dignity of women is his saying, "...the best among you are those who treat their wives well." (Tirmidhi)

24) Islam grants women numerous rights in the home and in society. Among them are the right to earn money, to financial support, to an education, to an inheritance, to being treated kindly, to vote, to a dowry, to keep their maiden name, to worship in a mosque, etc., etc.

25) Muslim women wear the head-covering (hijab) in fulfillment of God's decree to dress modestly. From a practical standpoint, it serves to identify one as attempting to follow God in daily life and, therefore, protects women from unwanted advances from men. This type of modest dress has been worn by righteous women throughout history. Prominent examples are traditional Catholic Nuns, Mother Teresa and the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus.

26) Arranged marriages are allowed in Islam but are not required. Whereas "forced" marriages, usually stemming from cultural practice, are forbidden. Divorce is permissible, however, reconciliation is what is most encouraged. But if there are irreconcilable differences then Islam permits a fair and just divorce.



Judaism

The Bible portrays the Jews as a people who have been chosen by God.

However, for believing Jews this is not an expression of superiority and arrogance but an expression of a particular obligation: an obligation to God's covenant, God's commandments, God's teaching – in Hebrew the **Torah**.

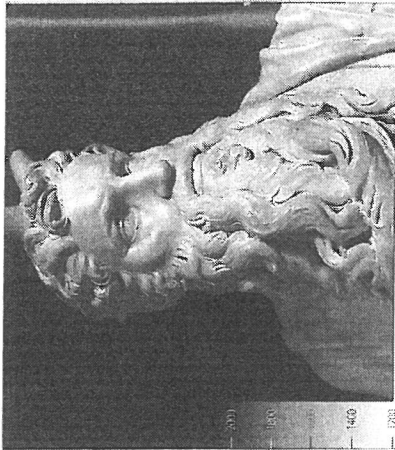
That certainly does not mean that all the commandments of the Jewish sacred law were given from the very beginning. And of course there were also elementary commandments of humanity among the peoples outside Israel.

What was new was that the commandments of humanity were now put under the **authority of one and the same God**.

No longer was there the general statement, 'You shall not kill, lie, steal, commit adultery.'
Now we hear, 'I am the Lord your God, you shall not kill, lie, steal, commit adultery.'

At a very early stage these commandments were summarized, the most important of them in the **Ten Words**, the 'Decalogue'. They were also taken over by the Christians. There are parallels to them in the Qur'an.

They form the **basis of a common fundamental ethic of the three prophetic religions**. Grounded in belief in the one God, these Ten Words of Israel form the great legacy of the Jews to humankind.



Moses

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS
I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol, of the name of the Lord your God. Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy.

Honour your father and your mother.

You shall not kill.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

You shall not covet your neighbour's house, you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

(Exodus 20.1-7)

You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

(Leviticus 19.18)

The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the stranger as yourself.

(Leviticus 19.34)

Which of you desires life, and covets many days to enjoy good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

(Psalm 34.13-15)

When a man appears before the throne of Judgment, the first question he is asked is not,

Have you believed in God?

or, Have you prayed and fulfilled the precepts?

but, Have you dealt honourably, faithfully in all your dealings with your neighbour?

(Talmud, Shabbat 31a)

The world rests on three things: on justice, truth and peace.

(Talmud, Avot 1.18)

You may modify a statement in the interests of peace.

(Talmud, Yebamot 65b)

It may not be granted you to complete the work, but you are not free to withdraw from it.

(Talmud, Avot 3.21)

The seal of God is truth.

(Talmud, Shabbat 55)



Moses

Elie Wiesel

Theodor Herzl

Martin Buber

Judaism is grounded in belief in the One God, who liberated the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt – under the leadership of Moses, through whom the Israelites on Mount Sinai received God's teaching, the Torah.

The **Hebrew Bible** – the earliest parts of which go back to the tenth century BC – is called **Tanakh** after the initial consonants of its three main divisions (Torah = instruction, Nebrim = Prophets, Ketubim = Writings). Christians generally call it the Old Testament – as opposed to the New Testament.

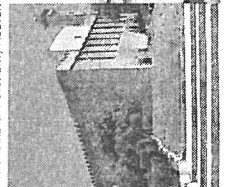
A rich body of religious writing, developed among rabbinic scholars from the second century CE onwards, including the Talmud.

Worldwide there are about 14 million Jews; the main currents are Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Liberal. The majority live in Israel and in North America. About 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust.

Jewish everyday life in New York



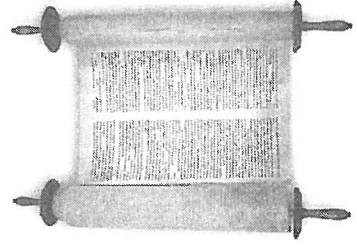
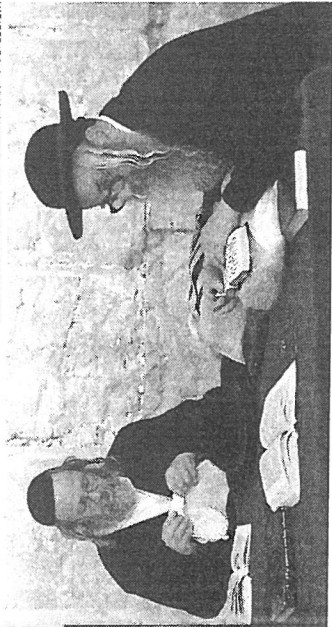
'The tomb of Abraham', Hebron



A Jewish family in Nazi Germany



Orthodox Jews before the Western Wall in Jerusalem



Torah scroll

JUDAISM

What are the differences between Judaism, Christianity and Islam?

Why have Jews been persecuted so much throughout history?

If Jesus was the King of the Jews, why don't Christians also follow Judaism ?

What do you know about customs, rituals and celebrations in Judaism?

How are Orthodox Jews different from other Jews?

What is Zionism?

Do men and women have different roles in Judaism?

How important is the nation of Israel in Judaism?

Ten Commandments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worship no other gods.• Do not worship idols.• Do not misuse the name of the Lord.• Keep the Sabbath holy.• Honor your father and mother.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not murder.• Do not commit adultery.• Do not steal.• Do not give false testimony• Do not covet.
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13 Articles of Faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• God exists• God is one and unique• God is incorporeal• God is eternal• Prayer is to God only.• The prophets spoke truth.• Moses was the greatest of the prophets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Written and Oral Torah were given to Moses.• There will be no other Torah.• God knows the thoughts and deeds of men.• God will reward the good and punish the wicked.• The Messiah will come.• The dead will be resurrected
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CELEBRATIONS:

Purim celebrates the deliverance of the Jewish people from the wicked Haman in the days of Queen Esther of Persia.

Passover (**Pesach**) celebrates the deliverance of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt. Our Passover megasite has tools, guides, insights, stories, inspiration—and just about everything you need to celebrate Passover. (But bring your own wine.

Thirty days ago we cleaned our homes and souls of leaven, and matzahed our way through the week-long festival of Passover. And now, Pesach Sheni—a **Second Passover!**

Shavuot marks the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai. The Ten Commandments are read in synagogues, just as they were in the desert on Mt. Sinai over 3,300 years ago.

Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year. It is the anniversary of the creation of Adam and Eve, and a day of judgement and coronation of G-d as king.

Virtually everything you need to know about **Yom Kippur**, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar. **Day of Atonement**, is the holiest day of the year for the Jewish people.^[1] Its central themes are atonement and repentance. Jewish people traditionally observe this holy day with an approximate 25-hour period of fasting and intensive prayer, often spending most of the day in synagogue services.

Chanukah commemorates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after a group of Jewish warriors defeated the occupying mighty Greek armies.



Buddhism

It has often been asserted that Buddhism is not really a religion but a philosophy.

However, Buddhism is not a philosophy. It is a religion, it is a doctrine of liberation and a way to liberation.

And in fact the Buddha understood himself as something like a doctor who wants to help suffering people to find liberation and redemption. However, everyone has to try out the means of healing for themselves.

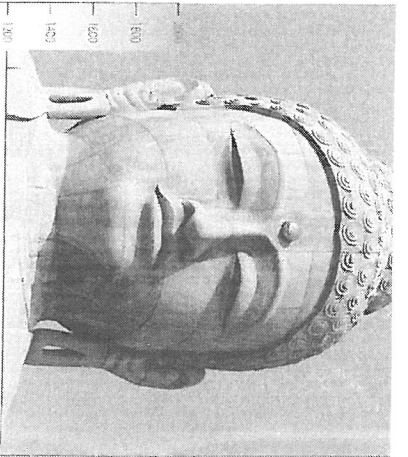
Here the Buddha is something like a present-day **psychotherapist** who helps people to overcome crises in life, to understand the causes of suffering and so cope with it, to be content with their limitations, finitude and morality. But the Buddha is more than a psychotherapist. He is more radical. He himself has experienced in Enlightenment that human beings, if they see through everything, can recognize that all that they see is not

stable, that **nothing in the world is permanent**. Everything is changeable, even the self, to which we so cling, basically has no abiding substance, but is just as transitory.

So the **suffering** from which human beings are to be cured is this illusion of a real self. Human beings are to learn through the **therapy** of the Buddha to free themselves from their own selves.

They are to find the way from a concern with the self and entanglement in the self to a **selflessness** which makes them free for an all-embracing compassion.

That is something which really should not be so remote for Christians either.



Buddha

The EIGHTFOLD PATH

Right view

Right understanding of the origin of suffering, right understanding of the cessation of suffering,

right understanding of the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

Right intentions

intentions of renunciation, intentions of goodwill, intentions to do no harm.

Right word

To refrain from lying, to refrain from slander, to refrain from harsh speech, to refrain from chattering.

Right action

To refrain from killing living beings, to refrain from taking what is not given, to refrain from an immoral love life.

Right livelihood

To earn one's living by legal means and without violence.

Right effort

The effort of the will, not to allow to come into being unwholesome things which have not come into being,

to make unwholesome things that have come into being disappear, to make wholesome things that have come into being untold.

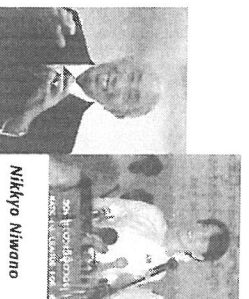
Right mindfulness

Developing awareness of the body so that greed and hatred are reduced.

Right concentration

To enter deep levels of mental calm through developing one-pointedness of mind.

(from *Mahāvastu* (Jhāna-Sūtra 21))



Nikkyo Niwano



Dalai Lama



Ang San Suu Kyi

Buddhism has its historical origin in the sixth century BC with Siddharta Gautama. In the **Four Noble Truths** he taught insight into the cause of human suffering and with the **Eightfold Path** showed a way towards overcoming it.

Through this insight Siddharta Gautama became the **Buddha**, the **Enlightened One**. Buddhists do not understand the Ultimate Reality, the Absolute as a personal deity or a creator god.

Buddha's teachings were gathered together over a long period; the most important are the **Theravada canon** (the *Pitaka*) and the **Mahayana sutras**.

There are more than 300 million Buddhists world-wide, divided into schools of Theravada (Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos) and Mahayana (Vietnam, China, Korea, Japan, Tibet).



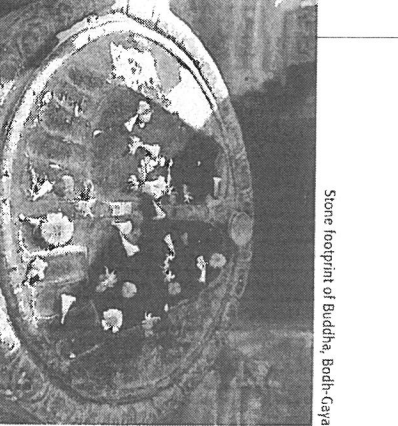
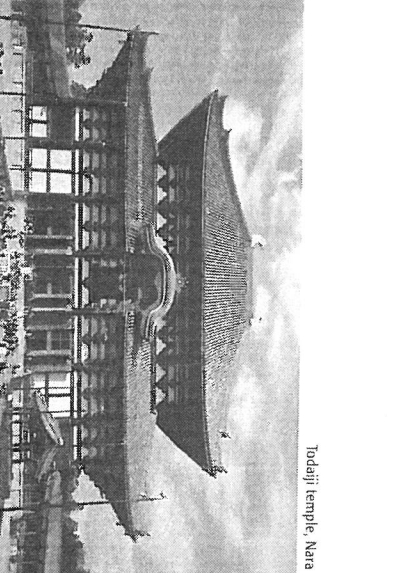
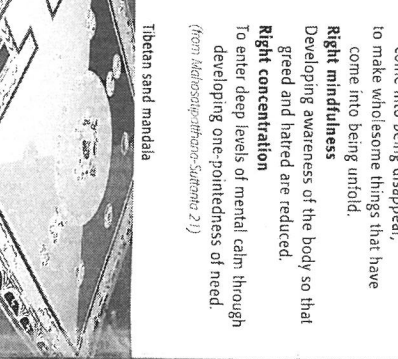
Buddhist monks at the autumn feast in Nara

Simplicity and transparency: a zen garden

Tibetan sand mandala

Todaiji temple, Nara

Stone footprint of Buddha, Bodhi-Gaya



The Golden Rule in all religions:



HINDUISM

This is
the sum of duty:
do nothing
to others
which would cause
you pain
if done to you.

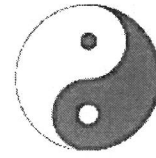
Mahabharata XIII.114.8



JAINISM

A person
should
treat
all creatures
as he himself
would
be treated.

Sutrakritanga 1.11.33



CHINESE RELIGION

Do not do
to others
what you
do not want them
to do to you.

Confucius, Analects 15.23



BUDDHISM

A state
that is not pleasant
or delightful
to me
must be so
for him also;
and a state
which is not pleasant
or delightful
for me,
how could I inflict that
on another?

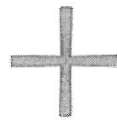
*Samyutta Nikaya V,
353.35-354.2*



JUDAISM

Do not do
to others
what you would
not want them
to do to you.

Rabbi Hillel, Shabbat 31a



CHRISTIANITY

In everything
do to others
as you
would have them
do to you.

Matthew 7.12, Luke 6.31



ISLAM

No one
of you is a believer
until
he desires
for his brother that
which he desires
for himself.

*40 Hadith
(sayings of Muhammad)
of an-Nawawi 13*

TAOISM

základní / konečný / nezážití, víra, starobylý, obvykle, přesný

Taoism is an _____ tradition of philosophy and religious _____ that is deeply rooted in Chinese customs and worldview. Taoism is also referred to as Daoism, which is a more _____ way of representing in English the sound of the Chinese word. Taoism is about the Tao. This is _____ translated as *the Way*. But it's hard to say exactly what this means. The Tao is the _____ creative principle of the universe. All things are unified and connected in the Tao.

- Taoism originated in China 2000 years ago
- It is a religion of unity and opposites; Yin and Yang. The principle of Yin Yang sees the world as filled with complementary forces - action and non-action, light and dark, hot and cold, and so on
- The Tao is not God and is not worshipped. Taoism includes many deities, that are worshipped in Taoist temples, they are part of the universe and depend, like everything, on the Tao
- Taoism promotes:
 - achieving harmony or union with nature
 - the pursuit of spiritual immortality
 - being 'virtuous' (but not ostentatiously so)
 - self-development
- Taoist practices include:
 - meditation
 - feng shui
 - fortune telling
 - reading and chanting of scriptures

Before the Communist revolution fifty years ago, Taoism was one of the strongest religions in China. After a campaign to destroy non-Communist religion, however, the numbers significantly reduced, and it has become difficult to assess the statistical popularity of Taoism in the world.

Do Taoists believe in Gods? Do they pray? What is the future of Taoism in China?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7veyrdenuYQ>

Relating to the Tao

Many Taoist ideas come from other Chinese schools of thought. It's not always easy to draw accurate distinctions between ideas that are fundamentally Taoist and those that Taoism took in from elsewhere, especially Buddhism. The Tao cannot be described in words. Human language can only give hints that may help the mind to form an idea. The most important thing about the Tao is how it works in the world, and how human beings relate to it. Philosophical speculation about what the Tao actually is, is less important than living in sensitive response to the Tao.

The most useful words to stimulate an idea of the Tao are found in the Tao Te Ching and Chuang Tzu:

The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao;

The name that can be named is not the eternal name.

The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth;

The Named is the mother of all things.

.....

There was something undifferentiated and yet complete,

Which existed before Heaven and Earth.

Soundless and formless it depends on nothing and does not change.

It operates everywhere and is free from danger.

It may be considered the mother of the universe.

I do not know its name; I call it Tao.

.....

All things in the world come from being.

And being comes from non-being. (form comes from formlessness)?

Tao Te Ching

The Way is to man as rivers and lakes are to fish,
the natural condition of life.

Chuang Tzu

The Tao is not a thing

The Tao is not a thing or a substance in the conventional sense. It cannot be perceived but it can be observed in the things of the world. Although it gives rise to all being, it does not itself have being. Although it's conventional to refer to The Tao, some writers think that the "the" should be dropped because it isn't in the original Chinese term. They feel that using 'the' gives Westerners the idea that the Tao is a metaphysical reality, by which they mean a thing (in the widest sense) or an absolute being like a god. But even the name Tao can lead Westerners to think of Tao in the same way that they think of objects. That sort of thinking is misleading: Thinking of the Tao as some sort of object produces an understanding of the Tao that is less than the reality. It might be more helpful to regard Tao as a system of guidance. And if one does this one can translate 'achieving union with the Tao' into 'developing oneself so as to live in complete conformity with the teachings of the Tao' which is easier to understand, and closer to the truth.

Glimpsed only through its effects

A good way of avoiding the Tao-as-object error is to see the various concepts of the Tao as doing no more than describing those effects of the Tao that human beings are aware of. They do not describe its reality.

The Tao is not God

The Tao is not God and is not worshipped. Taoism does include many deities, but although these are worshipped in Taoist temples, they are part of the universe and depend, like everything, on the Tao.

The Tao includes several concepts in one word:

- the source of creation
- the ultimate
- the inexpressible and indefinable
- the unnameable
- the natural universe as a whole
- the way of nature as a whole

Taoist pantheon

Westerners who study Taoism are sometimes surprised to discover that Taoists venerate gods, as there doesn't seem to be a place for deities in Taoist thinking.

Taoism does not have a God in the way that the Abrahamic religions do. There is no omnipotent being beyond the cosmos, who created and controls the universe. In Taoism the universe springs from the Tao, and the Tao impersonally guides things on their way.

But the Tao itself is not God, nor is it a god, nor is it worshipped by Taoists.

This may seem surprising as Taoists do use 'God-talk' to refer to the Tao:

The Venerable Lord, the Tao, was at rest in open mystery, beyond silent desolation, in mysterious emptiness... Say it/ he is there and do not see a shape; say it/ he is not there, yet all beings follow him for life.

Taishang laojun kaitian jing

And they conventionally revere Lao Tsu both as the first god of Taoism and as the personification of the Tao.

Nonetheless, Taoism has many gods, most of them borrowed from other cultures. These deities are within this universe and are themselves subject to the Tao. Many of the deities are gods of a particular role, rather than a personal divine being and have titles rather than names.

Books often describe the Taoist pantheon as a heavenly bureaucracy that mimics the secular administrations of Imperial China. Some writers think that this is the wrong way round and that the secular administrations took their cue from the structure of the heavens. Since the Imperial administrations and the religious culture of the time were closely intertwined this would not be surprising.

Taoist ethics - theory and practice

Theory

The common view of Daoism is that it encourages people to live with detachment and calm, resting in non-action and smiling at the vicissitudes of the world.

Contrary to this common view, Daoists through the ages have developed various forms of community and proposed numerous sets of behavioral guidelines and texts on ethical considerations. Beyond the ancient philosophers, who are well-known for the moral dimension of their teachings, religious Daoist rules cover both ethics, i.e., the personal values of the individual, and morality, i.e., the communal norms and social values of the organisation. They range from basic moral rules against killing, stealing, lying, and sexual misconduct through suggestions for altruistic thinking and models of social interaction to behavioral details on how to bow, eat, and wash, as well as to the unfolding of universal ethics that teach people to think like the Dao itself.

About eighty texts in the Daoist canon and its supplements describe such guidelines and present the ethical and communal principles of the Daoist religion. They document just to what degree Daoist realization is based on how one lives one's life in interaction with the community-family, religious group, monastery, state, and cosmos. Ethics and morality, as well as the creation of community, emerge as central in the Daoist religion.

Livia Kohn, Cosmos and Community

Taoist ethics are concerned less with doing good acts than becoming a good person who lives in harmony with all things and people.

Taoist ethics are inseparable from Taoist spirituality - both contain the same ideas.

If a Taoist wants to live well they should take all their decisions in the context of the Tao, trying to see what will fit best with the natural order of things.

Taoists thus always do what is required by events and their context, but they only do what is required, no more.

But what is required may be a lot less than modern Westerners think:

From the perspective of classical Taoism, Western humanism makes the mistake of assuming that the ability to intervene in life's events translates into a moral duty to do so.

The constant and unmistakable teaching of the Tao Te Ching is that humans are indeed capable of intervening in life's events, but the evidence of life, which humans constantly ignore, is that such intervention is destructive to all involved, and that we therefore have a moral duty to refrain from taking such actions.

Russell Kirkland, Responsible non-action in a natural world

So, in theory at least, Taoists tend not to initiate action - but wait for events to make action necessary - and avoid letting their own desires and compulsions push them into doing things.

Practice

In practice Taoism recommends the same sorts of moral behaviour to its followers as other religions. It disapproves of killing, stealing, lying and promiscuity, and promotes altruistic, helpful and kindly behaviour. Taoists believe such good behaviour is an essential part not only of self-improvement but of improving the world as a whole.

Cultivate the Tao within oneself; and one's virtue will be perfected.

Cultivate it within the household, and one's virtue will be abundant.

Cultivate it within the neighbourhood, and one's virtue will be enduring.

Cultivate it within the nation, and one's virtue will be overflowing.

Cultivate it within the entire world, and one's virtue will be universal.

Tao Te Ching 54

Quran

The **Quran** literally meaning "the recitation", is the central religious text of Islam, which Muslims believe to be a revelation from God (Allah). It is widely regarded by Muslims as the finest piece of literature in the Arabic language. Muslims consider the Quran to be the only book that has been protected by God from distortion or corruption. However, some significant textual variations (employing different wordings) and deficiencies in the Arabic script mean the relationship between the text of today's Quran and an original text is unclear. Quranic chapters are called suras and verses are called ayahs.

Muslims believe that the Quran was verbally revealed from God to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel (Jibril), gradually over a period of approximately 23 years, beginning on 22 December 609 CE, when Muhammad was 40, and concluding in 632 CE, the year of his death. Shortly after Muhammad's death, the Quran was collected by his companions using written Quranic materials and everything that had been memorized of the Quran.

Muslims regard the Quran as the most important miracle of Muhammad, the proof of his prophethood and the culmination of a series of divine messages that started with the messages revealed to Adam and ended with Muhammad. The Quran assumes familiarity with major narratives recounted in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. It summarizes some, dwells at length on others and, in some cases, presents alternative accounts and interpretations of events. The Quran describes itself as a book of guidance. It sometimes offers detailed accounts of specific historical events, and it often emphasizes the moral significance of an event over its narrative sequence. The Quran is used along with the hadith to interpret sharia law. During prayers, the Quran is recited only in Arabic.

Surah 1

In the name of Allah , the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.

[All] praise is [due] to Allah , Lord of the worlds -

The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful,

Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.

It is You we worship and You we ask for help.

Guide us to the straight path -

The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray.

U2 - YAHWEH

Take these _____
Click clacking down some dead end street

Take these _____

And _____ fit

Take this shirt

Polyester white trash _____ nowhere

Take this shirt

And make it _____

Take this _____

Stranded in some _____

Take this _____

And make it sing

Yahweh, Yahweh

Always pain _____

Yahweh, Yahweh

Still I'm waiting for the _____

Take these hands

Teach them _____

Take these hands

Don't make a _____ no

Take this mouth

So quick to _____

Take this mouth

Give it a _____

Yahweh, Yahweh

Always pain _____

Yahweh, Yahweh

Still I'm waiting for the _____

Still waiting for the dawn, the sun is coming up

The sun is coming up on the ocean

_____ (2x)

Yahweh, Yahweh

Always pain _____

Yahweh, tell me now

Why the dark before the _____?

Take this city

A city should be _____ a hill

Take this city

If it be your _____

What no man can own, no man can take

Take this heart

Take this heart

Take this heart

And make it _____

Bible

The **Bible** (sometimes **The Holy Bible**, **The Book**, **Work of God**, **The Word**, **The Good Book** or **Scripture**), from Greek (τα) βιβλία "(the) books", is the name used by Jews and Christians for their differing (and sometimes overlapping) canons of sacred texts.

The Jewish and Christian Bibles are actually collections of what were originally a number of independent books. The overwhelming majority of Christians refer to the Bible as the combination of Hebrew Scripture, known to Christians as the *Old Testament* or *First Testament*, and the *New Testament*, which describes the life and message of Jesus. For some (primarily Roman Catholics), the Apocrypha and Deuterocanonical books — various writings important in the Second-Temple period of Judaism — are also considered to be part of the Bible. For Jews, the term refers only to the Hebrew Bible, also called the Torah. Both Christians and Jews regard the Bible as the revealed word of God, with widespread variation on its accuracy, interpretation and legitimacy.

The Hebrew Bible, or *Tanakh*, contains twenty-four books divided into three parts: the five books of the *Torah* ("teaching" or "law"), the *Nevi'im* ("prophets"), and the *Ketuvim* ("writings").

The Septuagint, or LXX, is a translation of the Hebrew scriptures and some related texts into Koine Greek, begun in the late 3rd century BCE and completed by 132 BCE, initially in Alexandria, but in time elsewhere as well. It is not altogether clear which was translated when, or where; some may even have been translated twice, into different versions, and then revised.

Psalm 139

- 1: O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.
- 2: Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.
- 3: Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.
- 4: For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.
- 5: Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.
- 6: Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.
- 7: Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
- 8: If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.
- 9: If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
- 10: Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.
- 11: If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.
- 12: Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.
- 13: For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.
- 14: I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.
- 15: My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
- 16: Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.
- 17: How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!
- 18: If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.
- 19: Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.
- 20: For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain.
- 21: Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?
- 22: I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.
- 23: Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
- 24: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Gospels

In Christianity, **gospel** means "good news". Received opinion holds that the word *gospel* derives from the Old English word for "good news", a translation of the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον, *euangelion* (from this word comes the term "evangelist"). However, the word corresponding to "good" in Old English had a long vowel, and would normally develop into a MnE *goospel, leading some scholars to hold that the Old English term was not a translation of the Greek "good news," but rather a fresh coinage, "message concerning God."

Ordination of Women in Christian Churches

Christianity in general

Within Christianity, women historically have been in ministry roles since the time of the Apostle Paul, John and even Christ: Romans 16:1-2, Matthew 28:1-10, 2 John 1:1-2. Later denominations have been preventing women from being ordained on the basis of certain New Testament scriptures often interpreted as prohibitions of female ordination. An especially important consideration here is the way 1 Timothy 2:12 is translated and interpreted in the New Testament.

In the liturgical traditions of Christianity including the Roman Catholic Church, Eastern and Oriental Orthodoxy, Lutheranism, and Anglicanism, ordination—distinguished from religious or consecrated life—is the means by which a person is included in one of the orders of bishops, priests, or deacons. Many Protestant denominations understand ordination more generally as the acceptance of a person for pastoral work.

Anglicanism

Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori was elected in 2006 as the first female Presiding Bishop in the history of the Episcopal Church and also the first female primate in the Anglican Communion.

Main article: Ordination of women in the Anglican Communion

Within Anglicanism, the majority of Anglican provinces ordain women as deacons and priests.

The first three women priests ordained in the Anglican Communion were in the Anglican Diocese of Hong Kong and Macao: Li Tim-Oi in 1944 and Jane Hwang and Joyce Bennett in 1971.

Several Anglican provinces also permit the ordination of women as bishops, though, as of 2010, only four of the provinces have done so: the Episcopal Church in the United States and the Anglican churches of Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Cuba, one of the extra-provincial Anglican churches, has done so as well.

- In 1989, Barbara Harris was the first woman ordained as a bishop in the Anglican Communion, for the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts.
- In 1990, Penelope Ann Bansall Jaimeson was ordained a bishop for the New Zealand Anglican Diocese of Dunedin.
- In 1993, Victoria Matthews was elected a suffragan bishop in the Diocese of Toronto, Canada on 19 November, consecrated February 1994.
- In 2007, Nerva Cot Aguilera was ordained a bishop in the Episcopal Church of Cuba.
- In 2008, Kay Goldsworthy was ordained as an assistant bishop for the Anglican Diocese of Perth.^[36]

The Anglican church in Ireland has permitted the ordination of women as bishops since 1990 but none has yet occurred. The Anglican church in Scotland also permits the ordination of women as bishops since 2003, but none have yet been appointed.

In England the issue of women being ordained as bishops is contentious and under discussion as of summer 2010. The issue was voted down in 2008 by the Anglican Church in Wales.

On June 18, 2006, the Episcopal Church in the United States was the first Anglican province to appoint a woman, Katharine Jefferts Schori, as their Primate (the highest position possible in an Anglican province), called the "Presiding Bishop" in the United States.

With the October 16, 2010, ordination of Margaret Lee, in the Peoria-based Diocese of Quincy, Illinois, women have been ordained as priests in all 110 dioceses of the Episcopal Church in the United States.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses consider qualified public baptism to represent the baptizand's ordination, following which he or she is immediately considered an ordained minister. In 1941, the Supreme Court of Vermont recognized the validity of this ordination for a female Jehovah's Witness minister. The majority of Witnesses actively preaching from door to door are female. Women are commonly appointed as full-time ministers, either to evangelize as "pioneers" or missionaries, or to serve at their branch offices.

Nevertheless, Witness deacons ("ministerial servants") and elders must be male, and only a baptized adult male may perform a Jehovah's Witness baptism, funeral, or wedding. Within the congregation, a female Witness minister may only lead prayer and teaching when there is a special need, and must do so wearing a head covering.

Latter Day Saints

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not ordain women. However, some (most

notably D. Michael Quinn and Margaret Toscano) argue that the church ordained women in the past and that therefore the church currently has the power to ordain women and should do so.

Liberal Catholic Church

Of all the churches in the Liberal Catholic movement, only the original church, the Liberal Catholic Church under Bishop Graham Wale, does not ordain women. The position held by the Liberal Catholic Church is the same as the Roman Catholic Church, that the church, even if it wanted to ordain women, does not have the authority to do so and it is not possible for a woman to be ordained even if she went through the ceremony.

Orthodox Churches

The Orthodox Churches follow a similar line of reasoning as the Roman Catholic Church with respect to ordination of priests, and does not allow women's ordination.

Professor Evangelos Theodorou argued that female deacons were actually ordained in antiquity. K. K. Fitzgerald has followed and amplified Professor Theodorou's research. Bishop Kallistos Ware wrote: The order of deaconesses seems definitely to have been considered an "ordained" ministry during early centuries in at any rate the Christian East. ... Some Orthodox writers regard deaconesses as having been a "lay" ministry. There are strong reasons for rejecting this view. In the Byzantine rite the liturgical office for the laying-on of hands for the deaconess is exactly parallel to that for the deacon; and so on the principle *lex orandi, lex credendi*—the Church's worshipping practice is a sure indication of its faith—it follows that the deaconesses receives, as does the deacon, a genuine sacramental ordination: not just a *χειροθεσια* (chirothesia) but a *χειροτονια* (chirotonia). However, the ordination of women in the Catholic Church does exist. Although it is not widespread, it is official by the Roman Catholic Church.

Even though Bishop Kallistos says this, the Roman Catholic Church has made it clear it will not ordain women to any canonical position such as priest, deacon, or bishop. On October 8, 2004, the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Greece voted to permit the ordination of monastic women deacons, that is, women deacons to minister and assist at the liturgy within their own monasteries. There is a strong monastic tradition, pursued by both men and women in the Orthodox churches, where monks and nuns lead identical spiritual lives. Unlike Western-rite Catholic religious life, which has myriad traditions, both contemplative and active (see Benedictine monks, Franciscan friars, Jesuits), that of Orthodoxy has remained exclusively ascetic and monastic.

Protestantism

A key theological doctrine for Reformed and most other Protestants is the priesthood of all believers—a doctrine considered by them so important that it has been dubbed by some as "a clarion truth of Scripture."

"This doctrine restores true dignity and true integrity to all believers since it teaches that all believers are priests and that as priests, they are to serve God—no matter what legitimate vocation they pursue. Thus, there is no vocation that is more 'sacred' than any other. Because Christ is Lord over all areas of life, and because His word applies to all areas of life, nowhere does His Word even remotely suggest that the ministry is 'sacred' while all other vocations are 'secular.' Scripture knows no sacred-secular distinction. All of life belongs to God. All of life is sacred. All believers are priests." Hagopian, David. *Trading Places: The Priesthood of All Believers*.

However, most (although not all) Protestant denominations still ordain church leaders who have the task of equipping all believers in their Christian service. Eph. 4:11–13 These leaders (variously styled *elders*, *pastors* or *ministers*) are seen to have a distinct role in teaching, pastoral leadership and the administration of sacraments. Traditionally these roles were male preserves, but over the last century an increasing number of denominations have begun ordaining women. The Church of England appointed female lay readers during the First World War. Later the United Church of Canada in 1936 and the American United Methodist Church in 1956 also began to ordain women.

Meanwhile, women's ministry has been part of Methodist tradition in Britain for over 200 years. In the late 18th century in England, John Wesley allowed for female office-bearers and preachers. The Salvation Army has allowed the ordination of women since its beginning, although it was a hotly-disputed topic between William and Catherine Booth. The fourth, thirteenth, and nineteenth Generals of the Salvation Army were women.

Today, over half of all American Protestant denominations ordain women, but some restrict the official positions a woman can hold. For instance, some ordain women for the military or hospital chaplaincy but prohibit them from serving in congregational roles. Over one-third of all seminary students (and in some seminaries nearly half) are female.

CHRISTIANITY + Views favourable to homosexuality

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality_and_Christianity

Some Christians believe that marriage is the union of two people^[77] and that homosexual behavior is not inherently sinful.

In the 20th century, theologians like Karl Barth, Jürgen Moltmann, Hans Küng, John Robinson, Bishop David Jenkins, Don Cupitt and Bishop Jack Spong challenged traditional theological positions and understandings of the Bible; following these developments some have suggested that passages have been mistranslated or that they do not refer to what we understand as "homosexuality."^[79] Clay Witt, a minister in the Metropolitan Community Church, explains how theologians and commentators like John Shelby Spong, George Edwards and Michael England interpret injunctions against certain sexual acts as being originally intended as a means of distinguishing religious worship between Abrahamic and the surrounding pagan faiths, within which homosexual acts featured as part of idolatrous religious practices: "England argues that these prohibitions should be seen as being directed against sexual practices of fertility cult worship. As with the earlier reference from Strong's, he notes that the word 'abomination' used here is directly related to idolatry and idolatrous practices throughout the Hebrew Testament. Edwards makes a similar suggestion, observing that 'the context of the two prohibition in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 suggest that what is opposed is not same-sex activity outside the cult, as in the modern secular sense, but within the cult identified as Canaanite'".^[80]

Some Christians believe that Biblical passages have been mistranslated or that these passages do not refer to LGBT orientation as currently understood.^[81] Liberal Christian scholars, like conservative Christian scholars, accept earlier versions of the texts that make up the Bible in Hebrew or Greek. However, within these early texts there are many terms that modern scholars have interpreted differently from previous generations of scholars. There are concerns with copying errors, forgery, and biases among the translators of later Bibles. They consider some verses such as those they say support slavery^[82] or the inferior treatment of women^[83] as not being valid today, and against the will of God present in the context of the Bible. They cite these issues when arguing for a change in theological views on sexual relationships to what they say is an earlier view. They differentiate among various sexual practices, treating rape, prostitution, or temple sex rituals as immoral and those within committed relationships as positive regardless of sexual orientation. They view certain verses, which they believe refer only to homosexual rape, as not relevant to consensual homosexual relationships.^[84]

Following the lead of Yale scholar John Boswell, it has been argued that a number of early Christians entered into homosexual relationships,^[40] and that certain Biblical figures had homosexual relationships, despite Biblical injunctions against sexual relationships between members of the same sex. Examples cited are Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi, Daniel and the court official Ashpenaz, and, most famously, David and King Saul's son Jonathan.^[85] There has also been discussion about the significance of the selection of the Ethiopian eunuch as being the first gentile conversion: inclusion of a eunuch, representing sexual minority in the context of the time.

Al Sharpton, former Pentecostal minister, now a Baptist minister and Civil rights leader, during his campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2004 said that asking whether gays or lesbians should be able to get married was insulting: "That's like saying you give blacks, or whites, or Latinos the right to shack up – but not get married [...] It's like asking 'do I support black marriage or white marriage'... The inference of the question is that gays are not like other human beings".^[90] The support of Sharpton and other Black religious/political leaders (e.g. Harvard's Peter Gomes, Jesse Jackson, Coretta Scott King) is especially helpful for Black gays and lesbians who are negotiating the challenges of being gay in black communities.^[91]

Desmond Tutu, the former Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town and a Nobel Peace Prize winner, has described homophobia as a "crime against humanity" and "every bit as unjust" as apartheid:^[92] "We struggled against apartheid in South Africa, supported by people the world over, because black people were being blamed and made to suffer for something we could do nothing about; our very skins. It is the same with sexual orientation. It is a given. ... We treat them [gays and lesbians] as pariahs and push them outside our communities. We make them doubt that they too are children of God – and this must be nearly the ultimate blasphemy. We blame them for what they are."^[93]

Others consider that Christ made the commandments to "love God and one's neighbour," and to "love one's neighbour as oneself" touchstones of the moral law; that these imply a radical equality, and that, by this principle of equality, the Law of Moses is to be adjusted. Jesus exemplified this principle in his teaching on divorce. Furthermore, it is said that Jesus Christ instituted a virtue ethic, whereby the worth of one's action is to be adjudged by one's interior disposition. For these reasons, it is said that to condemn homosexuality is to fall into a pre-Christian "Pharasaical" legalism.

Modern gay Christian leader Justin R. Cannon promotes what he calls "Inclusive Orthodoxy" (not to be confused with the Eastern Orthodox Church). He explains on his ministry website: "Inclusive Orthodoxy is the belief that the Church can and must be inclusive of LGBT individuals without sacrificing the Gospel and the Apostolic teachings of the Christian faith."^[94] Cannon's ministry takes a unique approach quite distinct from modern liberal Christians, yet which still supports homosexual relations. His ministry affirms the divine inspiration of the Bible, the authority of Tradition, and says "...that there is a place within the full life and ministry of the Christian Church for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Christians, both those who are called to lifelong celibacy and those who are partnered."

CHRISTIANITY + Views critical of homosexual behavior

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality_and_Christianity

Many American Christians believe that marriage is defined by the union of a man and a woman, and that any sexual act outside of the marriage relationship is inherently sinful. Most American members of the Christian Right consider homosexual acts as sinful and think it should not be accepted by society. They tend to interpret biblical verses on homosexual acts to mean that the heterosexual family was created by God and that same-sex relationships contradict God's design for marriage and violate his will. Christians who oppose homosexual relationships sometimes contend that same-gender sexual activity is unnatural.

Christian objections to homosexual behavior are often based upon their interpretations of the Bible. Some Christians believe that the book of Leviticus contains prohibitions against male-male sexuality. Some Biblical scholars interpret Genesis 19:5 as indicating that homosexual activity led to the destruction of the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Other Biblical passages that some interpret as addressing the issue of homosexual behavior include Romans 1, I Corinthians 6:8–10, and Jude 1:7; the relevant portion of Romans 1 reads as follows:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men ... For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. (Romans 1:18a, 21–27)[63]

Christian author and counselor Joe Dallas says that the Biblical passages relating to homosexual acts uniformly prohibit that behavior.[64] Exodus International and others take the view that I Corinthians 6:9–11 offers Christian believers "freedom from homosexuality." [65][*dead link*][66]

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states "men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies ... must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity." [67] Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided." They oppose criminal penalties against homosexuality.[68] The Catholic Church requires those who are attracted to people of the same sex to practice chastity, because it teaches that sexuality should only be practiced within marriage, which it regards as permanent, procreative, heterosexual, and monogamous. The Vatican distinguishes between "deep-seated homosexual tendencies" and the "expression of a transitory problem", in relation to ordination to the priesthood; saying in a 2005 document that homosexual tendencies "must be clearly overcome at least three years before ordination to the diaconate." [69] A 2011 report based on telephone surveys of American Catholics conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute found that 56% believe that sexual relations between two people of the same sex are not sinful.[70][71]

In opposing interpretations of the Bible that are supportive of homosexual relationships, conservative Christians have argued for the reliability of the Bible,[72][73] and the meaning of texts related to homosexual acts,[54][74] while often seeing what they call the diminishing of the authority of the Bible by many homosexual authors as being ideologically driven.[75]

As an alternative to a school-sponsored Day of Silence opposing bullying of LGBT students, conservative Christians organized a Golden Rule Initiative, where they passed out cards saying "As a follower of Christ, I believe that all people are created in the image of God and therefore deserve love and respect." [76] Others created a Day of Dialogue to oppose what they believe is the "silencing" of Christian students who make public their opposition to homosexuality.