

World Religions

Written by Genevieve Trimarco

The Introduction and the section on Christianity
are written by Christine Breese, D.D., Ph.D.

Introduction

The subject of religion has as many beliefs, feelings, and perceptions around it as there are people on the planet. In a way, everyone has their own religion, even if they subscribe to a religion that many others do. This is because everyone has their own interpretations of the religion they subscribe to. If you were to ask followers of any given religion what their beliefs are, or what parts of the religion they agree or disagree with, they would all say something a little different from each other. Many people adopt the things they like in a particular religion, and ignore the things they don't believe in, even if this is done on an unconscious level.

Metaphysics is emerging as a new religion, or shall we say it is a very old religion that has been revived in the modern day. Metaphysics is a combination of many religions, old and new alike, particularly those that have Eastern philosophies, magical practices like alchemy, nature worship, and the belief that thought and emotion affects matter. You will learn much about this new "religion" called Metaphysics in your studies here at UMS, but this course in particular looks at other religions of the world in order to give you a solid background in understanding the beliefs of others in various belief systems. This could be useful in your work as a practitioner, healer, or teacher. Metaphysics tries to transcend the idea of religion, however, by all encompassing ideas like letting go of "written in stone" beliefs that never change, realizing the self as a "part of God," and seeing all beings as equals in spirit.

There do seem to be three beliefs that are common throughout all religions, no matter what culture they come from, no matter who founded the religion, and no matter who practices the religion. One of these beliefs is that there is a higher power that presides over the universe, the cosmos, human affairs, and the earth. This higher power is often called God in whatever language a person uses, and some believe that this higher power is some sort of force, or presence that is within each sentient being on Earth and in the universe.

The second belief that seems to be common in every religion is the concept of "being a good person." Some religions simply beseech the follower to do good deeds, take care of others, and practice right action. Others have deterrents in place that help the follower act more fastidiously, mainly the idea that there will be some sort of punishment for not "being a good person" or doing the right thing. For example, Christians call this "the final judgment" that happens upon death and the punishment is hell, or eternal damnation. Eastern philosophies call this karma, a type of punishment that happens in the next lifetime after the one where the bad deeds were done. The Golden Rule, "Do unto others have you as you would have done unto yourself," is quite prominent in every religion. This does not necessarily mean that each religion sees "doing the right thing" the same way. There are great variances in this area.

The third commonality across all religions is the idea that rituals of some sort are necessary and have been incorporated into the styles of worship of that particular religion. All religions have rituals, whether they are incorporated through prayer, singing, group gatherings, or other ways of focusing intent on the divine.

A person's religion is often a taboo subject in casual conversation. This is because it is difficult for those of differing religions to agree on many of the points that come up in discussions about religion. It is often joked, "Never discuss religion or politics if you don't want to have a fight." There have been many arguments, from mild to severe, the mildest being hurt feelings during and after discussions about religion, the most severe being bloody and brutal wars over whose religion was the strongest, was to be adopted by all, and whose God was the true sovereign ruler of all life on Earth. One would think that something as sacred as religion could not possibly be the instigator of wars, but many feel so strongly about their religious beliefs that they want to make everyone a follower of their religion.

Of course, forcing others to adopt a religion that they do not believe in has never been a truly successful strategy, for as soon as the followers are released from the forced position, they return to the religion they loved previously. However, their children are often brought up with the religion and therefore adopt it as their own. This is how some religions were forcibly spread throughout the world.

Some religious fanatics decided that instead of trying to convert disbelievers into their religion, they would simply kill them so that there was no longer an opposing force. The idea was to purge the earth of heathen

people. This was actually a righteous idea and many thought they were doing the right thing by releasing their victims from faulty beliefs, religions and practices. As mentioned above, “doing the right thing” is not the same in every religion.

Religion has its uses. Some metaphysicians would say that religion itself is elementary to the true knowledge that all beings, from the smallest particle in an atom to the largest celestial body in the universe, and everything in between, is God. Others would say that it is an excellent beginning point for those who are true to the inner self and are called to explore their spirituality. Others would say that religion fits right in with metaphysics and that it is not necessary to stop practicing one’s religion in order to be a metaphysician. That is one of the nicer aspects of metaphysics, this tendency toward all-inclusiveness toward other religions.

Religion could be seen as a vehicle for training the human condition to be more compassionate, loving, and tolerant of all things, but this is not the end result in Metaphysics. Correcting the faults in the human condition is only a beginning, and in some metaphysical circles not even necessary. Religions usually specify certain rules, beliefs about reality and the divine, and denote punishments for breaking the rules. However, in an all accepting universe that allows all things to have free will, static rules, beliefs, and practices cannot stay the same forever because the nature of the universe itself is a movement between chaos and patterns, back to chaos and them back to patterns again. Change is the only thing that is inevitable. Many religions do not allow for this inevitable, natural movement of the powers that be in our universe, although some do. In fact many rules, beliefs, and practices are outdated in this day and age, for those rules were created for a different time-period, a different human psychology, and different cultures that may not apply in the modern day. Therefore it is important that rules, beliefs, and practices can change as the times change and the evolution of the human understanding of the nature of reality progresses. Metaphysics itself is perhaps a response to this need for spiritual change as the world and humanity changes.

Religion helps to focus the seeker who has just begun to explore the deeper aspects of life, and for the advanced seeker it may serve as a focus of intention. However, religion itself must eventually be left behind for true enlightenment to take place, according to some concepts in metaphysics. If each of us is a part of God, or perhaps even *God itself*, then no religion can truly define what we are. Religion can only serve as a guide as we seek enlightenment on the matter of who we are.

Many of your clients, patients, and students will come from various religious backgrounds. Some will have no religious background at all. Either way, it is useful for you to know what these religious backgrounds, beliefs and practices are. By knowing where the seeker is coming from you may know better how to work with him or her. Be courteous if the seeker is still very dedicated to a particular religion, for you will not assist anyone by telling him or her to immediately throw away something that he or she has found valuable and useful in his or her life-path. This can polarize a seeker immediately, and he or she will not want to hear anything else you have to say. So begin gently, and let him or her decide when it is time to move beyond religion, or how and when he or she decides to incorporate that religion into the mix with the concepts you are teaching or practicing. Not everyone feels the need to leave religion behind altogether, and they may find that their particular religion fits quite easily with what you are teaching or practicing, especially if it has metaphysical flavors to begin with. Remember, religion may have served you at one time as well, and perhaps it still is, and this may be the case for others as well. Religion serves as a focus for divine intent, a wish to do good, and belief in a higher power(s) that is benevolent and wishes to assist humankind. This can only be a good thing!

So let us now look at the various religions of the world, take a peek at their practices and beliefs. Let us find the value in each and how they have served mankind in the search for understanding of God and self.

Review Of Literature

(Exam questions are not drawn from the following material in this section, Review Of Literature)

In writing this course I used the *Sourcebook Of World Religions: An Interfaith Guide To Religion And Spirituality* (2000) as a guide for which religions I wanted to cover. It presents more than twenty religions and spiritual paths and hundreds of articles, quotations, sacred text, and prayers. It even has new material on the 1999 Parliament Of The World’s Religions. Each chapter has at least one contributing author and most have three or more. Essays include pieces by Thomas Berry on the cosmology of various religions, Thomas Keating’s guidelines for interreligious dialogue, and Marcus Braybrooke’s survey of the interfaith movement, all exploring building community among religions. The editor is Joel Beversluis. He has worked in academic religious publishing and volunteered in ecology, interfaith and peace organizations. He went to Western Michigan

University and studied comparative religion there. As of 2000 he was Editor and Publisher of CoNexus Press. There are four parts to this book: *Who Are We?*, *Becoming a Community of Religions*, *Choosing Our Future* and *Selected Resources for the Community of Religions*.

In the reference section of most libraries there is an encyclopedia-style set of volumes called *Man, Myth & Magic* (1985), by editor in chief Richard Cavendish. It is a great reference guide for just about anything one would like to learn about in the areas that the title suggests (man, myth and magic). There is an extensive list of editorial board members, consultants, and assistant editors. These books cover a wide range of subjects including witchcraft (vol. 22), Jesus (Vol. 6), and a bit on new religious movements (Vol. 7).

A great book for learning about Buddhism in many different countries and how it has been changed is *The Experience of Buddhism* (2002) by John S. Strong. It has two parts: "The Experience of Buddhism in South Asia" and "The Development of Buddhism Outside India." The sub categories begin with the life story of Buddha and its ramifications and go through the experience of the Sangha to the Dharma and practices of Buddhists in Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, the Tibetan cultural area, China, Japan, and the West. It has a helpful guide to the transliteration and pronunciation of Buddhist terms and a two-page map of part of the continent of Asia titled "The World of Buddhism."

Another very helpful book I used is *A World Religions Reader* (1997). It has chapters on nine different religions, which include Secular Humanism, Buddhism, and Judaism. Each chapter begins with a map that shows the population and location of the people in that religion in the world. This book combines classic statements of some of the major thinkers and institutions and includes the words of Martin Luther King and John Lennon with passages from the scriptures. Each chapter is organized by five headings, they are "The Religious Mind" "World Views," "Institutions and Rituals," "Ethical Expression," and "Modern Expression." There is also a selected summary of beliefs, a list of historical highlights, major festivals, and key terms at the end of each chapter. The editor, Ian Markham, is a Professor of Theology at Liverpool Hope University College. He teaches Interface Ethics and Ecumenical Theology. He is the author of *Plurality and Christian Ethics* (CUP), and also sits on the Council of the Advertising Standards Authority.

The World's Religions (1991) is a completely revised and updated edition of Huston Smith's *The Religions Of Man* (original copyright 1958). It is widely considered the best introduction to the world's religions and has detailed, but still very readable chapters on Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam and Christianity, among others, and features sections on the inner dimensions of these great religions. Huston Smith is a leading figure in the comparative philosophy of religion and is regarded as the most accessible and eloquent authority on the history of religions. He has taught at MIT, Washington University, and Syracuse. In 1991 he was currently a visiting professor at the University of California, Berkley.

Edward Rice wrote *Ten Religions of the East* (1978) a great book with stories of the founders and spiritual leaders of ten of the world's less well known faiths and what these religions have evolved into today. It covers the Jains, the Zoroastrians, the Sikhs, Taoism and Confucianism, Bon and Shinto, Cao Dai, the Baha'I Faith, and Theosophy. Edward Rice is a writer, artist, and photographer who illustrated the book and added his own photographs as well. He has written *Marx, Engels, and the Workers of the World*, *The Ganges: A Personal Encounter* and *The Five Great Religions* as well as others.

Nature Religions In America: From the Algonkian Indians To The New Age (1990) is a valuable resource of religions that have been at the heart of American Culture, but previously have not been acknowledged. The author, Catherine L. Albanese, covers influential people such as the Hutchinson Family Singers to Thomas Jefferson and John Muir that have had some part in Nature Religions. Catherine L. Albanese is professor of religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She is the author of many articles and books in American religious history.

John M. Koller and Patricia Koller have written a valuable book titled *A Sourcebook In Asian Philosophy* (1991). It is a collection of English translations of the basic texts that have shaped the major Asian philosophical traditions. It incorporates all the fundamental texts from Asian philosophy, which give great insight into these traditions. It begins with a helpful pronunciation guide. It is separated into three parts: Hindu texts, Buddhist texts, and Chinese texts, and includes chapters on Vedas and Upanisads, Samkhya, Yoga, Jainism, the rise of the Mahayana, Zen, the vision of Confucius, Chinese Buddhism and much more. The authors have twenty- five years of experience teaching introductory courses in Asian philosophy.

This next book is a survey of world religions that are active in the twentieth century. *A Handbook Of Living Religions* (1984), edited by John R. Hinnells, was very useful in writing this course because it covers the major religions and regional studies of Japan and China, among others. Collaborators include scholars from universities in many countries. Their goal in writing this book was to outline developments that have taken place and assess the variety, vitality and impact of the world's religions in modern times.

Paul Williams is a professor on Indian and Tibetan philosophy at the University of Bristol. In his book *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition* (2000) he shares the central concepts of classical Indian Buddhist thought. He makes even abstract and complex ideas accessible through his clear and lucid style. In this book there is also the most up-to-date survey of Buddhist Tantra in India. Paul Williams is also Co-Director of the Centre for Buddhist Studies at the University of Bristol.

The Way of Zen (1959) by Alan W. Watts was the first comprehensive explanation of Zen Buddhism, it is an introduction to the theory and practice of this school of thought. The book is a study of the historical and cultural growth of this philosophy. It is split up into two parts, Background & History, and Principles & Practice. Alan W. Watts has been an editor, minister, and college professor. He has lectured at several universities, and is known as a stimulating and unconventional philosopher.

Another good source on Zen is the book *Zen Buddhism* (1956), it is the selected writings of D.T. Suzuki, edited by William Barrett. It includes selections from D.T. Suzuki's books *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, *Studies in Zen*, and *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind*. It is a good introduction for the general reader of the history and spirit of Zen.

William Anderson has written an interesting book on archetypes and our oneness with the Earth that I used a bit for the section on Wicca and Nature Spirituality. It is titled *Green Man* (1990) and is the record of a quest for this archetype through religion, art, folklore, and architecture from prehistory to the present. The author has won the "Silver Pen" award in poetry for his scholarly *Dante the Maker*. He lectures widely and has written for *Parabola*.

Dr. Lauren Artress' book *Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool* (1995) is an interesting study on this form of meditation where a person walks a painted path while in a trance and can transcend the limits of still meditation. Reverend Dr. Lauren Artress is Canon for Special Ministries at San Francisco's Grace Cathedral and has founded a project addressing the need for spirituality in our time called Quest: Grace Cathedral Center for Spiritual Wholeness. She created the Labyrinth Project as well.

Looking into Judaism I found a valuable book called *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide To Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals* (2000) by George Robinson. It covers a great deal on the subject including chapters on the Jewish idea of Prayer, what daily services are like, the evolution of the prayer book, the thirty-nine categories of forbidden work and all the holidays and festivals. George Robinson holds the award for excellence in Jewish journalism which is the Simon Rockower Award. He frequently has articles in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *Newsday*, as well as some Jewish publications.

The New Religions (1970) by Jacob Needleman is a book on how young America is reaching inward through Zen, yoga, the Tibetan Lamas, and other teachings. The author has a Ph. D. in Philosophy from Yale and taught at San Francisco State College.

The *I Ching* is also called the *Book of Changes* and is the oldest surviving text in Chinese culture, Confucianism and Taoism have their beginnings in the *I Ching*. Originally it was a book of divination and can be used by throwing three coins, asking a question and look to the book for the answer. The version I consulted was edited by James Legge (1996) who leads us through the complex and subtle world of the *I Ching*.

On researching the Baha'I Faith I found a book called *The Dynamic New Religion: Baha'I Faith* (1967) by Jessyca Russell Gaver. It is filled with all the information on this new creed and includes pieces on the international aspects of the faith, America's destiny in the Baha'I world and the path of the true believer.

Michael Harner, Ph.D, has written an intriguing book on Shamanism called *A Guide To Power and Healing: The Way Of The Shaman* (1982). It shares the art of shamanic healing step by step through simple techniques and exercises. There are some great adventure stories and intelligent wisdom inside. The author has practiced shamanism and shamanic healing for more than twenty-five years and has tried to bring them back to contemporary life. He is head of The Foundation for Shamanic Studies in Norwalk Connecticut.

Shambhalla (1978) by Nicholas Roerich is a record of his spiritual journey through Central Asia and Tibet. It has a lot of good information on subjects such as, Buddhism in Tibet, Dreams and Gurus.

An in depth book on the beginnings of Hinduism is *The Origins & Development of Classical Hinduism* (1989) by A.L. Basham. It is a small book based on a series of five lectures given on ten key university campuses in the U.S. during 1984 and 1985 by A.L. Basham. They were his last public lectures in North America before he died in 1986. As the title suggests, it is a look at the start of this ancient religion and goes on to investigate the development as well as the rise of other mystical and ascetic traditions, such as Buddhism and Jainism. This author was one of the world's foremost authorities on ancient Indian culture and religion.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is a famous poem in Hindu literature and is part of the *Mahabharata*, the great Indian epic. The *Bhagavad Gita* is a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Prince Arjuna the morning of a climactic battle. Krishna provides the Prince with spiritual means to take action under trying circumstances. Mainly it is a poem about the moral universe of Hinduism. The version I used was translated by Eknath Easwaran (copyright 2000). He was director of the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, which he founded in 1961 in Berkley, CA. He is the author of many books on spiritual life.

A helpful book on Islam by John L. Esposito is *What Everyone Needs To Know About Islam* (2002). It is a book written after September 11th by this leading expert. It is presented in a question and answer format. It contains the question about Islam that people most want to know. It goes from the basic questions to the most complicated aspects of this culture; there is a special section on terrorism and violence. The author is the University Professor of Religion and International Affairs and founding director of the Center for Muslim/Christian Understanding at the Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University.

Another book from John L. Esposito that I used was *Islam: The Straight Path* (1998). Written in the time of the Iranian revolution, Gulf War, the World Trade Center bombing it is a guide to Islamic history, faith, culture, and politics.

The Pillars of Islam: An Introduction To The Islamic Faith (1990) by Frances Gumley & Brian Redhead is a basic read with information on the faith of Islam. Frances Gumley was the first woman to edit the *Catholic Herald* and has been the producer of religious programs for the B.B.C. She has co-authored two other books with Brian Redhead who is a well known broadcaster who regularly presents the *Today Program* on Radio Four.

Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Adair T. Lummis wrote a book that I used called *Islamic Values in the United States: A Comparative Study* (1987). It is a sociological study presenting the experiences and problems of today's immigrant Muslims in the context of Islam's 100 year history in America and internationally. Ms. Haddad is Professor of Islamic History at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Adair T. Lummis is Research Associate at the Center for Social and Religious Research at the Hartford Seminary.

Islam: Opposing Viewpoints (2001), edited by Jennifer A. Hurley, is part of the Opposing Viewpoints Series. It is filled with diverse opinions, from experts, policy makers, and concerned citizens. There are many articles, speeches and long excerpts from books organized around substantive issues within the general debate.

Another introductory book on Islam is *Understanding Islam: An Introduction to the Muslim World* (1995) by Thomas W. Lippman. It outlines the sacred book, the Koran and explains "The Five Pillars Of Faith." It also describes the differences that divide Islam, and most importantly shows the influence of Islam on world affairs. The author served in Cairo as *Washington Post* bureau chief for the Middle East for over three years, observing this turbulent region.

An insightful and easy to read book called *Islam Unveiled: The True Desert Storm* (1991) by Dr. Robert A. Morey was a good resource on everything you need to know about Islam. The author is the Executive Director of the Research and Education Foundation and is the author of over twenty books.

The Essential Koran: The Heart of Islam (1993) translated by Thomas Cleary is a good book for a beginner. It is an introductory selection of readings from the Qur'an, which are made very accessible for an outsider to understand and get to know the basics of Islamic spirituality.

A book on the somewhat forgotten tradition in Judaism is *Jewish Meditation: A Practical Guide* (1985) by Aryeh Kaplan. It is a step-by-step introduction and covers mantra meditation, contemplation and visualization within a Jewish context. The author was a well-known Orthodox rabbi who taught Jewish meditation.

Judaism (1961), edited by Arthur Hertzberg, is a collection of the classic authorities on Jewish spirituality and their ideas about the basic values and affirmations of this religious way of life.

The Joy of Ritual (1999) is from the author Barbara Biziou. She has shared some great ideas on spiritual celebrations, making every day sacred and using ritual to enhance our daily routines. She is the president of Blue Lotus Productions and has produced audiotapes on meditation, basic metaphysics, and ritual.

Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma, Volume Five (1999) is from this great master who explains the scriptures. The book has a side-by-side Chinese/English format. He did many things in his lifetime such as establishing monasteries, setting forth principles and founding the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association in America.

Another good resource for learning about Buddhism is *Buddhism: A Brief Introduction* (1996). It is also from the teachings of the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua. It covers all the basics of this religion and has an interview with the Master about the schools of Buddhist practice.

Introduction To Tibetan Buddhism (1995) by John Powers is an in-depth look at this area of Buddhism including a look at its Eastern Indian background, Tibetan culture, and the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The author is an assistant professor in the Department of Religion at Wright State University, has an M.A. in Indian Philosophy from McMaster University and a Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies from the University of Virginia.

The whole story of Buddha's life can be found in *The Buddha: His Life Retold* (1989). It is an epic tale with samplings of his 84,000 discourses, miracles and the events that made up his life. The author, R.A. Mitchell is self educated in Pali and Sanskrit and did his graduate work at Harvard in Physics and Astronomy, he has had a lifelong interest in Buddhism.

A useful book that predominantly covers the five great faiths of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity is *Great Religions of the World* (1978). It is compiled by the National Geographical Society, editor emeritus, Melville Bell Grosvenor, and over 15 contributing authors. These scholars, National Geographic writers and photographers bring this book together with 370 illustrations and many interesting accounts of these religions.

Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity: From 330 B.C. to 330 A.D. (1964) by Francis Legge is a two-volume book bound as one. It goes into a full description of the religious beliefs and practices of those times. It is very important for understanding the growth and development of the Christian religion. Francis Legge was a prominent scholar in Biblical archeology and related subjects for more than thirty years.

The *Holy Qur'an* (1917) is the holy scriptures of the Islamic Faith. The edition I used is over 1,200 pages long and has side-by-side Arabic and English translations.

The edition of the Bible that I used was *Holy Bible: New American Standard*, red letter edition, published by Broadman & Holman.

The Teaching Company's The Great Courses has versions of the Old and New Testament in 2 volumes each. *The Old Testament* is presented by Professor Amy-Jill Levine, Vanderbilt University Divinity School. The Old Testament is presented by Professor Bart D. Ehrman, University Of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. These are small transcripts of lectures and course guidebooks.

Time-Life Books has an interesting resource of supernatural and scientific findings titled *Mysteries of the Unknown: Mind Over Matter* (1988), editor in chief Jason McManus with many contributors. It has sections on varying subjects like physical powers of will, putting psycho-kinesis to the test and essays on the world of poltergeists, the hypnotic state and turning visions into reality.

The Science of Mind (1938) is a book by Ernest Holmes. It is about the religion of the same name and is split up in six parts with meditations at the end.

Hans-Joachim Schoeps wrote the book *The Religions of Mankind: Their Origin and Development* (1966). It was very helpful in researching the roots of many religions and how they are similar.

African Religions

Traditional African religions have an emphasis on salvation and wholeness in this world, here and now. In the *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000), in the chapter *Introduction To African Traditional Religions*, Rev. Dr. Abraham Akrong tells us, "Because Africans believe that life is a complex web of relationships that may either enhance and preserve life or diminish and destroy it, the goal of religion is to maintain those relationships that protect and preserve life." These relationships provide mental and physical harmony, and stability to create well-being and wholeness for each individual.

The quest for salvation has a lot to do with the threat to their lives, both physical and spiritual, on a daily basis. They believe that the threat from evil forces is very near and real. But it is also a life affirming religion that celebrates the fullness of life and is known for its lively celebratory mood in worship. Drums and dancing are almost always involved in rites and practices.

A Yoruba chant that celebrates the spirits in nature and helps maintain proper relations between the community and the living cosmos says:

O God of heaven, O God of earth,
I pray thee uphold my hand,
My ancestors and ancestresses
Lean upon earth and succor me
That I may not quickly come to you.

In *A Handbook of Living Religions* (1984) there is a chapter on African religions written by Aylward Shorter. He explains the concept of tribes and ethnic groups as being a fluid one in Africa because, "...ethnic identities shade into one another and there have been continual migrations and amalgamations throughout African history. Basically the tribe is a category of interaction among heterogeneous peoples, but it has a cultural core which consists of a human tradition in a given physical environment."

Buddhism

Buddhism began around 500 B.C. It is based on the teachings of Buddha, who began as Prince Siddhartha Gautama, also known as Sakyamuni subsequent to his experiences of enlightenment. He renounced his royal birthright upon the opening of his heart to the suffering of the world. It is explained in *The Lost Gospel Of The Earth: A Call For Renewing Nature, Spirit, And Politics* (1996) by Tom Hayden that, "Siddhartha was stunned by what he found in the streets: sick people, elderly and infirm people, the corpses being wheeled away. Humanity seemed the prisoner of an inescapable wheel of suffering, a natural cycle of sickness, old age, and death. His life was transformed by this understanding. He slipped away from his compound, devoted to find the cause and remedy for all the suffering." Then his path to enlightenment began. In the book *The Great Religions By Which Men Live* (1956), by Floyd H. Ross and Tynette Hills, they explain Buddha's middle way: "The path that Gautama had found was what he was to describe as the "middle path," between extremes. The extremes to be avoided are the life of sensual indulgence on the one hand, and the life of drastic asceticism on the other. Both leading to out of balance living. Neither led to the true goal of release from suffering. Many people never realize what over indulgence in comfort and sensual pleasures have done to their real questions and their real games. Some who have discovered the evils of over indulgence come to regard as wickedly anything that gives a sense of pleasure. Both groups are reacting too strongly to the human appetites.

"Gautama discovered that either extreme is a lie, for neither brings happiness. Overindulgence has the same final effect on a person like the release of tension on the strings of a violin. Extreme self-denial, on the other hand, has the same general effect as tightening the strings on a violin, something at the breaking point. Harmony is lacking because there is either too little tension or too much... It was to help men find their harmony within themselves and with the universe that he began to teach." Basically he taught a middle way ethically, avoiding the two extremities of asceticism and hedonism, and philosophically avoiding the two extremities of eternalism and annihilation.

Throughout his life Buddha traveled from Northeast India through the Ganges basin and taught there until his death at the age of 84. Buddhism spread throughout India and then disappeared from there as a consequence of successive foreign invasions by conquerors unified under Islam. But by then Buddhism had spread throughout Asia and is the dominant faith in the countries of Southeast Asia, Central and East Asia, and many Himalayan areas.

The principal teachings of Buddha are known as the Four Noble Truths. They address suffering, its causes, cessation, and path. Though the first truth is crudely translated as 'life is suffering,' or *dukkha*, the Buddha's philosophy was not pessimistic. He pinpointed six moments in life to expand on the somewhat generalized first truth. These are times when it's clear how dislocated life is whether a person is wealthy, poor, average or gifted. He stated that all humans experience:

1. The trauma of birth. Psychoanalysts of our time believe that a great deal of anxiety and painful feelings stem from our births.
2. The pathology of sickness.
3. The morbidity of decrepitude, for instance, when you are young and physically vital, life is almost automatically good. In later years the fears seem to pile up about being unloved, ill, physically repulsive and dependent on others.

4. The phobia of death.
5. To be tied to what one dislikes.
6. To be separated from what one loves.

Buddha taught the eightfold path as a course of treatment for the problem of life stated in the Four Noble Truths. The eight steps are (*They are slightly different here than how they are covered in the UMS Meditation Skills course*):

1. Right views.
2. Right intent. Finding what your heart really wants. Using whatever your passion is to guide you.
3. Right speech. Being aware of what you say and what it shows of your true self. Noticing throughout the day when we are not speaking truth, and then investigating why. After we have worked on that and become aware of what we say, we will see the need for changes. The changes should proceed in the direction first, toward veracity. Second, our speech should lead us to charity, avoiding gossip, slander and abuse.
4. Right conduct. This includes objectively understanding one's behavior before trying to improve it. Reflecting on one's motives and actions.
5. Right livelihood. Having an occupation that is considered compatible with spiritual seriousness.
6. Right effort.
7. Right mindfulness.
8. Right concentration.

In *Great Religions of the World* (1978) Joseph M. Kitagawa talks about the greatness that can be achieved as a Buddhist. "Its deepest insights—now as in Buddha's day—voice a salvation and compassion capable of inspiring political, social, and religious renewal." In *The Dhammapada* (1985), translated by Eknath Easwaran, we learn the meaning of enlightenment, "The Buddha expresses enlightenment not as the meeting with God or an immersion in Bliss, but as the disassembling of the conditioned personality and the acceleration that comes with perfect freedom."

Ultimately the goal of Buddhists is to reach nirvana, which is "...the extinction of all craving, resentment, and covetousness. [To the Buddha] such extinction of craving and other improper attitudes was true happiness," according to Floyd H. Ross and Tynette Hills in their book *The Great Religions By Which Men Live* (1956). To obtain nirvana one must go through the cessation of suffering and its causes. Buddhists believe that desire is the underlying cause of suffering. The Buddha offered the following analysis on this: The chain of simultaneous, dependent originations makes up a circle, with each link causing all other links. It is important to notice that it is not a willful sin or wickedness that leads to suffering, but ignorance. As we become aware of the links in the chain, we then have the power to free ourselves from the chain. This is the central philosophical doctrine of Buddhism. Before we can be cured, we need to accept the diagnosis, which is:

The Twelve Nirdanas

1. *Avidya*: Ignorance-individuation, unity becomes divided, the "formations" of karma.
2. *Samsara*: forms-consciousness emerges.
3. *Vijnana*: the principle of consciousness and from this, mentality and body emerge.
4. *Nama-rupa*: mentality and body-from this, the six sense minds and organs appear.
5. *Shadayantana*: six sense minds and organs-sensations and perceptions arise.
6. Sensations and perceptions-*spasha*, from that, feelings and discriminations arise.
7. From *vedana*-feelings and sensations, thirst and craving arise.
8. From thirst and craving, which is called *trishna*, grasping and clinging appear.
9. From grasping and clinging, *upadana*, conception takes place.
10. Conception is known as *bhava*, because of *bhava*, the continuing process of existence goes on.
11. *Jati* is the continuing process of existence, and from that, growth, sickness, old age, decay and death.
12. Sickness, old age and death is *jana-marana*, and following it "sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair arise. Thus arises the whole mass of suffering." In all this:

"No doer of the deeds is found,
No one who ever reaps their fruit.
Empty phenomena are there.
Thus does the world roll on.

No God, no Brahma, can be found,
No maker of this wheel of life.
Empty phenomena are there,
Dependent upon conditions all.

Some other key teachings are the Sutras. *The Brahma Sutra* is from the Upanishads by Badarayana and is one of the foundational texts of Vedanta. The Diamond Sutra is a brief Mahayana scripture that outlines the bodhisattva way. The Heart Sutra is the encapsulation of Mahayana Buddhist teaching and focuses on the emptiness of permanent and separate self-existence. These are only a few Sutras of which there are many.

Buddhism is not a system of metaphysical beliefs within which there is an ethical expression, but a transforming way of life. Buddhists in general are less worried about beliefs and more concerned about behavior. The Dhammapada is a collection of the Buddha's sayings that capture the heart of the Buddhist way. Many Buddhists memorize the sayings and use them as a guide for their behavior in argument and reflection. Here is a sample of chapter one taken from *The Dhammapada* (1965), translated by Irving Babbitt:

"The twin verses:

1. All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the wagon.
2. All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.
3. 'He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me,' – in those who harbor such thoughts hatred will never cease.
4. 'He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me,' – in those who do not harbor such thoughts hatred will cease.
5. For never does hatred cease by hatred here below: hatred ceases by love; this is an eternal law."

In the earlier part of Buddhism, there was an emphasis on the worthy monk to keep the monastic rules while he was seeking nirvana through developing virtue, wisdom, and insight by following the eightfold path. But as Buddhism developed this was supplemented by a new focus on attaining those qualities as well as compassion to be used to help others. This new emphasis came from the Mahayana ideal of the Bodhisattva. A *Sourcebook in Asian Philosophy* (1991), written by John M. Koller and Patricia Koller, expands on this: "Here the historical Buddha's enlightenment was seen as the basis for helping other suffering beings overcome their suffering rather than as the means of overcoming one's own *duhkha*. This change in emphasis, from seeking nirvana as the primary aim to helping others overcome their suffering, revolutionized Buddhist practice and teaching, leading to new interpretations of traditional teachings, to new philosophical positions, and ultimately to the practices of Zen (Ch'an) and Tantra."

There are two main schools of Buddhism, one being Theravada (literally "the traditions of the elders"), which originated as an offshoot of the early Sthavira school, and the Mahayana ("the large vehicle"). They initially split because of their views on the involvement of lay people (those who were not monks). The Theravada group thought that the main expression of the Buddhist life was to be in the monastery and the Mahayanan group had a greater role for lay people. The Theravada Buddhists attained enlightenment, whereas the Mahayanan Buddhists emphasized that no one attains the goal until all are enlightened.

Zen is a school of Buddhism that emphasizes meditation or *zazen*, which means sitting meditation, as the main practice of calming and clearing the mind and to aid in perceiving reality in a direct way. It has its origins in the Mahayana thought and in the practice of the Yagacara and Madhyamaka as they were understood in the third to fifth centuries in China. It is generally agreed that the greatest Zen thinker was Dogen (1200-1253) the founder of the Soto Zen School in Japan. His greatest work was the *Shobogenzo* "Treasury of the Eye of True Teaching." A *Sourcebook in Asian Philosophy* also tells us, "Although the *Shobogenzo* essays contain traditional teachings and acute analysis of these teachings, their overall thrust is not to present theoretical analysis or a metaphysical view of reality, but to lead the reader into a self awakening...It was naturally assumed that these essays, born out of learning realized in meditational practice, would be incorporated into the totality of the reader's own Zen practice." Hui-neng (638-713), 6th Patriarch of Zen in China, is regarded by many as the true father of Zen.

The Diamond Sutra And The Sutra Of Hui-Neng (1990) by A.F. Price and Wong Mou-lam is considered a must among those who are interested in the ancient texts of Buddhism. *The Sutra Of Hui-Neng*, also known as *The Platform Sutra*, is an important Zen work. Many have translated these works, and this is one of those translations. *The Diamond Sutra* is a treasured work of Buddhist literature and is the oldest printed book in the world. Price &

Mou-lam explain the origin of its name, "It is known as the Diamond Sutra because its teaching is said to be like a Diamond that cuts away all dualistic thought, releasing one from attachment to objects and bringing one to the further shore of enlightenment." Here is a story of the Diamond Sutra: "Guatama Buddha delivered this *The Diamond Sutra* in the 4th century C.E. during a satsang (transmission of truth and communion with an enlightened being). When *The Diamond Sutra* was spoken by Buddha, many who were present went into deep samadhi, or nirvana, attaining total enlightenment.

Hui-neng, a poor illiterate, was a commoner who happened across someone in the street reciting the Diamond Sutra, reading it out loud, which caused him to ask the reader where he was from. He was soon off to the monastery where the reader's teacher resided. He spent almost a year there.

His Holiness was choosing a successor, and asked those who would apply for the position to write a stanza. The first one to submit a stanza was one of the teachers at the monastery, although His Holiness was not completely convinced and invited more stanzas. The first submission read:

Our body is the *bodhi* tree,
And our mind a mirror bright,
Carefully we wipe them hour by hour
And let no dust alight.

"One night, the Patriarch visited the kitchen secretly. Hui-neng was doing menial work at the monastery, pounding rice. His Holiness noticed him and invited him to write a stanza, joining the competition with the others at the monastery for the position His Holiness was to pass on. Hui-neng dictated it and asked a fellow to write it in the designated spot for submissions, on a wall. His read:

There is no bodhi tree,
Nor stand of a mirror bright.
Since all is void,
Where can the dust alight?

"The patriarch sent for him at midnight and expounded on The Diamond Sutra, giving Hui-neng a private session on it. When Hui-neng heard the words, 'One should use one's mind in a way that it will be free from any attachment,' he became completely enlightened, having discovered the true essence of mind that it was 'intrinsically free from becoming or annihilation...free from change!... that all things are the manifestations of the essence of mind!' These were Hui-neng's own words. Knowing that he had realized the essence of mind, the patriarch said, 'For him who does not know his own mind there is no use learning Buddhism. On the other hand, if he knows his own mind and sees intuitively his own nature, he is a hero, a teacher of gods and men, a Buddha.' Thus, to the knowledge of no one, the dharma was transmitted to him at midnight, and consequently became the inheritor of the teaching of the Sudden School as well as of the robe and the begging bowl. 'You are now the sixth patriarch,' said he.

"Hui-neng later went on to write a work inspired by *The Diamond Sutra* called *The Sutra of Hui-neng*. Both of these works have become cornerstones in Buddhist and Zen traditions. *The Sutra of Hui-neng* is a special case as far as sutras are concerned, for the word sutra is usually reserved only for sermons of the Buddha or of great bodhisattvas. Hui-neng is the only "ordinary" man to have dictated sutras. He sold firewood for a living."

Original Buddhism is characterized in the following terms: It was empirical, it was scientific, pragmatic, therapeutic, psychological, egalitarian, and it was directed to individuals. The central institution is the Sangha (the community of Buddhists). Monastic communities form a Sangha to free the monks of the practical concerns of the world so that they can focus on cultivating disattachment and ultimately to obtain enlightenment. Thich Nhat Hanh wrote the book *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (1995), and in it he describes the similarities between Buddha and Jesus Christ and their respective religions: "Even if you have a beautiful temple or church with fine decorations and artwork, if inside there is no tolerance, happiness, understanding, or love, it is a false Sangha, a false Church. The living teaching expressed by the lives of the Buddha and Jesus should always be the models for our practice. The sutras are not the living teachings of the Buddha. To receive the true teaching, we must emulate the life and work of Buddha himself. The same is true of Christianity. The Gospels in their written or even oral form are not the living teaching of Jesus. The teachings must be practiced as they were lived by Jesus. The church is the vehicle that allows us to realize these teachings. The church is the hope of Jesus, just as the Sangha is the hope of the Buddha. It is through the practice of the church and the Sangha that the teachings come alive."

Buddhists practice meditation as a means of seeing reality as it really is, which is also a definition of Nirvana. Meditation is also used to implement the Four Noble Truths to obtain enlightenment. These are the elementary stages involved in meditation as explained to Ananda by Buddha, translated by Edward Conze in *The Buddhist Scriptures* (1959):

The Restraint of the Senses

“By taking your stand on mindfulness you must hold back from the sense-objects of your senses, unsteady by nature. Fire, snakes, and lightning are less inimical to us than our own senses, so much more dangerous. For they assail us all the time. Even the most vicious enemies can attack only some people at some times, and not at others, but everybody is always and everywhere weighed down by his senses. And people do not go to hell because some enemy has knocked them down and cast them into it; it is because they have been knocked down by their unsteady senses that they are helplessly dragged there. Those attacked by external enemies may, or may not, suffer injury to their souls; but those who are weighed down by the senses suffer in body and soul alike....As a man who has subdued his enemies can everywhere live and sleep at ease and free from care, so can he who pacified his senses. For the senses constantly ask for more by way of worldly objects, and normally behave like voracious dogs who can never have enough. This disorderly mob of the senses can never reach satiety, not by any amount of sense-objects; they are rather like the sea, which one can go on indefinitely replenishing with water.

“In this world senses cannot be prevented from being active, each in its own sphere. But they should not be allowed to grasp either the general features of an object, or its particularities. When you have beheld the sight-object with your eyes, you must merely determine the basic element that it represents, (e.g. it is a “sight-object”) and should not under any circumstances fancy it as, say, a woman or a man. But if now and then you have inadvertently grasped something as a “woman” or a “man”, you should not follow that up by determining the hairs, teeth, etc., as lovely. Nothing should be subtracted from the datum, nothing added to it; it should be seen as it really is, as what it is like in real truth. If you thus try to look continually for the true reality in that which the senses present to you, covetousness and aversion will soon be left without a foothold....Afflicted by their likes and dislikes, as by excessive heat or cold, men will never find either happiness or the highest good as long as they put their trust in the unsteady senses.”

In the next part of this teaching the Buddha talks about the suffering that is caused when we become attached to a sense-object and what it is, trying to categorize it or imagine what its qualities might be. The following excerpt is a translation by Edward Conze in *The Buddhist Scriptures* (1959):

How the Senses Cause Bondage

“A sense-organ, although it may have begun to react to a sense-object, does not get caught up in it unless the mind conceives imaginary ideas about an object....For people are tied down by a sense-object when they cover it with unreal imaginations; likewise they are liberated from it when they see it as it really is. The sight of one and the same object may attract one person, repel another, and leave a third indifferent. A fourth may be moved to withdraw gently from it. Hence the sense-object itself is not the decisive cause of either bondage or emancipation. It is the presence or absence of imaginations which determines whether attachment takes place or not. Supreme exertions should therefore be made to bring about a restraint of the senses, for unguarded senses lead to suffering and continued becomings. In all circumstances you should therefore watch out for these, i.e. your seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. Do not be negligent in this matter even for a moment....”

Translated by Edward Conze in *The Buddhist Scriptures* (1959) is the teaching about how one should think of eating and practice. It says:

Moderation in Eating

“Moreover, you must learn to be moderate in eating, and eat only enough to remain healthy, and fit for trance. For excessive food obstructs the flow of the breath as it goes in and out, induces lassitude and sleepiness, and kills all valour. And as too much food has unfortunate consequences, so also starvation does not lead to efficiency. For starvation drains away the body's volume, luster, firmness, performance, and strength. You should take food in accordance with your individual capacity, neither too much nor, from pride, too little....”

The Buddha talks about how we should be very mindful of what our body is doing and what we want it to do in all times and different situations. Translated by Edward Conze in *The Buddhist Scriptures* (1959), he explains:

Full Awareness of the Postures, etc.

“You are further asked to apply mindfulness to your sitting, walking, standing, looking, speaking, and so on, and to remain fully conscious in all your activities... Loss of mindfulness is the reason why people engage in useless pursuits, do not care for their own true interest, and remain unalarmed in the presence of things which actually menace their welfare...The Deathless is beyond the reach of those who disperse their attention, but it is within the grasp of those who direct their mindfulness on all that concerns the body. Without mindfulness no one can have the correct holy method; and in the absence of the holy method he has lost the true Path. By losing the true Path he has lost the road to the Deathless; the Deathless being outside his reach, he cannot win freedom from suffering. Therefore you should superintend your walking by thinking “I am walking,” your standing by thinking “I am standing,” and so on; that is how you are asked to apply mindfulness to all such activities.”

In the next section Buddha talks about the importance of finding a secluded place where you can be, feel totally alone to meditate and find the benefits of solitude. Translated by Edward Conze in *The Buddhist Scriptures* (1959):

The Advantages of Solitary Meditation

“Then, my friend, you should find yourself a living-place which, to be suitable for Yoga, must be without noise and without people. First the body must be placed in seclusion; then detachment of the mind is easy to attain. But those who do not like to live in solitude, because their hearts are not at peace and because they are full of greed, they will hurt themselves there, like someone who walks on very thorny ground because he cannot find the proper road... One who delights in solitude is content with his own company, eats wherever he may be, lodges anywhere, and wears just anything. To shun familiarity with others, as if they were a thorn in the flesh, shows a sound judgment, and helps to accomplish a useful purpose and to know the taste of a happy tranquility. In a world which takes pleasure in worldly conditions and which is made unrestful by the sense-objects, he dwells in solitude indifferent to worldly conditions, as one who has attained his object, who is tranquil in his heart. The solitary man then drinks the nectar of the Deathless, he becomes content in his heart, and he grieves for the world made wretched by its attachments to sense-objects. If he is satisfied with living alone for a long time in an empty place, if he refrains from dallying with the agents of defilement, regarding them as bitter enemies, and if, content with his own company, he drinks the nectar of spiritual exultation, then he enjoys a happiness greater than that of paradise.”

We learn that the Buddha felt very strongly that thought creates reality whether it is negative or positive. In this next portion he shares how to create a healthy cycle of thoughts and curb thoughts that are not healthy. Translated by Edward Conze in *The Buddhist Scriptures* (1959).

Concentration, and the Forsaking of Idle Thoughts

“Sitting cross-legged in some solitary spot, hold your body straight, and for a time keep your attention in front of you, either on the tip of the nose or the space on your forehead between the eyebrows. Then force your wandering mind to become wholly occupied with one object. If that mental fever, the preoccupation with sensuous desires, should dare to attack you, do not give your consent, but shake it off, as if it were dust on your clothes. Although, out of wise consideration, you may habitually eschew sense-desires, you can definitely rid yourself of them only through an antidote which acts on them like sunshine on darkness. There remains a latent tendency towards them, like a fire hidden under the ashes; this, like fire by water, must be put out by systematic meditation. As plants sprout forth from a seed, so sense-desires continue to come forth from that latent tendency; they will cease only when that seed is destroyed. When you consider what suffering these sense-pleasures entail, by way of their acquisition, and so on, you will be prepared to cut them off at the root, for they are false friends. Sense-pleasures are impermanent, deceptive, trivial, ruinous, and largely in the power of others; avoid them as if they were poisonous vipers! The search for them involves suffering and they are enjoyed in constant disquiet; their loss leads to much grief, and their game can never result in lasting satisfaction. A man is lost if he expects contentment from great possessions, the fulfillment of all his wishes from entry into heaven, or happiness from the sense-pleasures. These sense-pleasures are not worth paying any attention to, for they are unstable, unreal, hollow, and uncertain, and the happiness they can give is merely imaginary.

“But if ill-will or the desire to hurt others should stir your mind, purify it again with its opposite, which will act on it like a wishing jewel on muddied water. Friendliness and compassionateness are, you should know, their antidotes; for they are forever as opposed to hatred as light is to darkness. A man who, although he has learned to abstain from overt immoral acts, still persists in nursing ill-will, harms himself by throwing dirt over himself, like an elephant after his bath. For a holy man forms a tender estimate of the true condition of mortal beings, and how should he want to inflict further suffering on them when they are already suffering enough

from disease, death, old age, and so on? With his malevolent mind a man may cause damage to others, or he may not; in any case his own malevolent mind will be forthwith burned up. Therefore you should strive to think of all that lives with friendliness and compassionate, and not with ill-will and the desire to hurt. For whatever a man thinks about continually, to that his mind becomes inclined by the force of habit. Abandoning what is unwholesome, you therefore ought to ponder what is wholesome; for that will bring you advantages in this world and help you to win the highest goal. For unwholesome thoughts will grow when nursed in the heart, and breed misfortunes for yourself and others alike. They not only bring calamities to oneself by obstructing the way to supreme beatitude, but they also ruin the affection of others, because one ceases to be worthy of it.

“You must also learn to avoid confusion in your mental actions, and you should, my friend, never think even one single unwholesome thought. All the ideas in your mind which are tainted by greed, hate, and delusion deprive you of virtue and fashion your bondage. Delusion injures others, brings hardship to oneself, soils the mind, and may well lead to hell. It is better for you not to hurt yourself with such unwholesome thought!”

The inevitability of death, translated by Edward Conze in *The Buddhist Scriptures* (1959):

How to be Mindful of Death

“But if you should make any plans that do not reckon with the inevitability of death, you must make an effort to lay them down again, as if they were an illness which attacks your own self. Not even for a moment should you rely on life going on, for Time, like a hidden tiger, lies in wait to slay the unsuspecting. There is no point in your feeling too strong or too young to die, for death strikes down people whatever their circumstances, and is no respecter of youthful vitality. The body we drag along with us is a fertile soil for all sorts of mishaps, and no sensible person would entertain any firm expectation of well-being or of life. Who could ever be free from cares as long as he has to bear with this body which, as a receptacle of the four great elements, resembles a pot full of snakes at war with each other? Consider how strange and wonderful it is that this man, on drawing in his breath, can immediately afterwards breathe out again; so little can life be trusted! And this is another strange and wonderful thing that, having slept, he wakes up again, and that, having got up, he goes to sleep again; for many are the adversities of those who have a body. How can we ever feel secure from death, when from the womb onwards it follows us like a murderer with his sword raised to kill us? No man born into this world, however pious or strong he be, ever gets the better of the King of Death, either now, or in the past or of the future. For when death in all its ferocity has arrived on the scene, no bargaining can ward him off, no gifts, no attempt at sowing dissension, no force of arms and no restraint. Our hold on life is so uncertain that it is not worth relying on. All the time Death constantly carries people away, and does not wait for them to reach the age of 70! Who, unless he be quite mad, would make plans which do not reckon with death, when he sees the world so unsubstantial and frail, like a water bubble?”

Here we learn more about the four Truths and how those who have become awakened to them and their true meaning will not be reborn into the physical world. Translated by Edward Conze in *The Buddhist Scriptures* (1959):

The Four Holy Truths

“Investigating the true nature of reality and directing his mind towards the complete destruction of the Outflows, the Yogin learns to understand correctly the four statements which express The Four Truths, i.e. suffering, which can be defined as oppression; then the cause of suffering, which is the same as its origination; the extinction of suffering, which consists essentially in the definite escape from it; and finally the path which leads to tranquility, and which has the essential function of saving. And those whose intellect has awakened to these Four Holy Truths, and who have correctly penetrated to their meaning, their meditations shall overcome all the outflows, they will gain the blessed calm, and no more will they be reborn. It is, on the other hand, through its failure to awaken to these four facts which summarize the essential nature of true reality, and through its inability to penetrate to their meaning, that the Samsaric world whirls round and round, that it goes from one becoming to another, and that it cannot win the blessed calm.”

Paul Williams with Anthony Tribe explain in their book *Buddhist Thought* (2000) more about meditation. “Calming meditation aims to still the mind. It presupposes that the meditator has faith in the teachings of the Buddha, has adopted the moral perspective required of a good Buddhist, and is otherwise involved in the religious activities expected of a practitioner who is seriously engaged in the path. In order to bring about the desired state of mental calm, the meditator starts by learning to focus the mind, narrowing down its attention so that he or she becomes simply aware. In other words, he or she concentrates.”

Buddha's appeal was to the individual, that one should work to attain enlightenment through a process of confronting personal situations, trials and tribulations. In *Sourcebook Of The World Religions* (2000) an article written by Ven. Mahinda Deegalle titled *Buddhist Experience In North America*, states, "...The doctrine of codependent origination proposes an interdependence between nature and human beings. Furthermore, Buddhist teachings maintain that the nature of the human psyche affects the natural environment, while the natural environment in turn influences the shape of the human psyche positively or negatively."

Succinctly, the doctrine of five laws, *niyama dhammas*, tells us that human beings and nature are bound together. The five laws are physical, biological, psychological, moral, and casual. Mahinda Deegalle also tells us, "Among these five, the casual law operates within each of the first four; likewise, the physical law conditions biological growth, and all the laws influence human thought patterns, which eventually shape the moral standards of a society. These Buddhist doctrines and insights attempt to suggest that human beings and the environment mutually condition and influence each other in the formation of the human psyche and of the nature of the world."

Buddhists have a system of five realms or "courses" (*gatis*) of rebirth and what good and bad karma one had from a past life would determine which of these one will be reborn into. In a translation of *The Dhammapada* by Eknath Easwaran (1985), is a statement specifying what is meant by karma: "The law of karma...which seems so exotic when mind and matter are relegated to different worlds, simply states that cause and effect apply universally and that the effect is of the nature of the cause. Every event, mental or physical, has to have effect whether in the mind, in action, or in both - and each such effect becomes a cause itself...karma is stored in the mind. What we call personality is made up of karma, for it is the accumulation of everything we have done and said and thought. So karma follows wherever we go...the end of the body cannot clear these accounts."

The five realms are the hell realm, animal realm, hungry ghost, human, deity and another one that came later, the "titans" (asuras, or demonic antiheroes) realm. In Tibetan Buddhism there are six worlds, called *bardo*, literally meaning "intermediate state." Taken from Chogyal Namkhai's book *Dream Yoga And The Practice Of Natural Light* (1992), they are:

1. The ordinary waking state
2. The dream state while sleeping
3. The meditation experience
4. The dying process up until the actual death, a momentary loss of consciousness
5. The person wakes up in the fifth *bardo* with hallucinations as a consequence of karma
6. The search for rebirth in *samsara* (physical life)"

Also from the translation by Eknath Easwaran, he explains *The Dhammapada*, "The *Dhammapada* was written for everyone, whereas the sutras were written particularly for monks and nuns of the Buddhist order. The *Dhammapada* contains the part of Buddhist teaching that can be practiced by the ordinary citizen. Here is a teaching about consciousness from *The Dhammapada*, 'the Buddha speaks of states of consciousness as different worlds, all as real as everyday life to those having direct experience of them...in the everyday world, of course, the vast majority of us are unaware of a higher reality. Those few who have glimpsed it are compared by the Buddha to the fortunate birds who escaped the hunters net.' *The Dhammapada* also talks about hell, 'The torments of hell have exercised a strong hold over Orthodox believers in all religions. Buddhism, which alludes to hell often, is no exception, and the descriptions in some of the later scriptures are gruesome enough to rival any of the horrors familiar in the Christian tradition. The one difference is that in Buddhism the soul does not go to eternal damnation. Perhaps the only fortunate thing about the Buddha's concept of impermanence is that it extends to all states: hell, like heaven, is not lasting. A person remains there, suffering intensely, only until his unfavorable karma from past evil deeds is exhausted. Then he is reborn again on earth, where he will have a fresh opportunity to learn that actions within their life contained the seeds of their own punishment. Hell in Buddhism really is educative, not vengeful, and it is not the sentence of our wrathful deity but the natural, unavoidable results of actions that violate Dharma. Suffering drives home the lesson that certain ways of living bring pain to oneself as well as to others, because life is an indivisible whole; after that lesson, one gets the opportunity to correct one's direction in a new life...the real significance of hell is that it is a mental state caused by the content of a person's own thoughts and actions... According to the Buddha, a large part of our experience is simply the mechanical return of the karma our previous actions have accumulated.' "

From the same book we learn about *samskara* and how it can become a negative pattern: “If we continue to commit a mistake—say, an outburst of anger—each repetition makes it easier to make the same mistake again, so that gradually anger becomes part of our character. That is very close to what the Buddha means by a *samskara*: a habit of thinking which karmically locks us into patterns of behavior over which we have less and less control with every succeeding repetition... because it is easiest to follow the worn path of stimulus and response, harmful *samskaras* are easy to form and to get trapped in. Actively asserting the responses that do not come naturally—love, forgiveness, patience, compassion in the face of hatred—is the only way to avoid gradually succumbing to evil: that is, to avoid becoming internally laced with harmful *samskaras*... if we do not try to shape our lives, the conditioning of our *samskaras* will shape them for us, little by little; but if we do try again, little by little, in the numberless decisions of everyday life—then anyone of us can become good, as a bucket is filled drop by drop... in the context of a comprehensive spiritual program with a supreme goal, this kind of discipline is not repression. Psychologists rightly caution that repression of anger can have disastrous physical and emotional consequences. On the eightfold path, however, we are not asked to repress anger but to learn to channel its raw power before it explodes into outbursts of destructive behavior, drawing on that power for spiritual growth. Always a pragmatist, the Buddha even goes on to the extent of saying that he would become an outburst of anger if it really could help bring an end to suffering. It is precisely because it does not help end suffering that he urges us to curb anger at its source.”

Historical Dates

The life of Buddha from	536-476 B.C.
The first Buddhist Congress in	473 B.C.E.
Second Buddhist Congress	363 B.C.E.
The reign of Buddhist Emperor Asoka	273-236 B.C.E.
The rise of the Mahayana tradition	236 B.C.E.
Life of Nagarjuna, a leading philosopher	CE c. 200
Expansion of Buddhism to Vietnam, China, Korea, Java, Japan, Burma, and Sumatra	CE 220-552
First Buddhist monastery established in Tibet	C.E. 749
The rise of the Japanese Zen sects	C.E. 805-6
The life of the poet Mila	C.E. 1040-1123
Jodo Shinshu sect comes to America with immigrants from Japan	C.E. 1898
The Zen Buddhist society is formed in New York	C.E. 1931

Major Festivals

Parinirvana	February 15 th
Buddha’s birthday, also know as Puja	April 8 th
Wesak/Viasakha	May 16 th
Padmasambhava Day	July 10 th
Dhamma Day/Asala	July 14 th
Sangha Day	November 10 th
Bodhi Day	December 8 th

Key Terms in Buddhism

Arahat A person who has reached absolute holiness—the ideal of the Theravada group.
Bhikkus Monks
Dharma (or dhamma) the Buddhist teaching.
Enlightenment A place beyond suffering when influences such as greed, hatred, and delusion do not have power over a person anymore.
Nirdanas The Chain Of Simultaneous Dependent Buddhahood. Originations, the heart of Buddhist Philosophy.
Samsara The interconnected nature and cycle of rebirth in the world.

Bodhisattva Those who are about to become Buddhas (i.e. enlightened ones) have this title. It literally means “an enlightened being.”
Gotama (Gautama) The clan name of the founder of Buddhism, who lived in northern India during the sixth century B.C.E.
Paramita Perfection. The stages to perfection are used by the Bodhisattva to reach There are six (or ten) of these stages.
Siddha The perfect ones.

The Baha'i Faith

The Baha'i Faith is an independent world religion that was pioneered about 150 years ago. The Baha'i has members from 2,100 ethnic groups speaking over 800 languages. It began in Iran and according to Denis MacEoin author of *Baha'ism*, a chapter in *A Handbook of Living Religions* (1984), editor John R. Hinnells, "Confined to the Middle East, it is likely that Baha'ism would have joined the ranks of the numerous heterodox Islamic sects there, with most of which it shares common features. But in 1894 the movement became one of the first missionizing Eastern religions to reach the West, arriving in the United States while still in a state of flux after its emergence from Shi'a Islam."

Its history is closely connected with the lives of its leading figures. 'Ali-Muhammad, titled the Bab, born in 1819 in southern Iran, was believed to be The Promised One, or Mahdi, expected by Muslims. He started Babism, which is where the Baha'i Faith originated. By the age of 32 he was put to death because Iran's Muslim clergy and ultimately its government opposed him and his followers, thousands of whom were also killed. In his time he wrote Scriptures in which he promulgated a new calendar, new religious laws, and new social norms. Mirza Husayn-'Ali, Titled Baha'u'llah, was born in 1817 and became a follower of the Bab in 1844. He was then imprisoned for his beliefs. Nine years later he had a vision that he was the divine teacher the Bab had promised. In 1863 he announced publicly that he was a messenger of God. He lived the rest of his days in exile and prison, where he produced over 100 volumes of Scripture.

His son, 'Abbas Effendi, Titled 'Abdu'l-Baha, was born the year of his father's imprisonment. He was appointed his successor, the exemplar of his teachings, and the interpreter of his revelation. Under 'Abdu'l-Baha the Baha'i Faith spread much further than the Middle East, India, and Burma and came into Europe, the Americas, southern Africa, and Australasia. He died in 1921. His successor was Shoghi Effendi Rabbani. He was born in Palestine in 1897 and was the grandson of 'Abdu'l-Baha. He was educated at Oxford and was head of the Baha'i Faith from 1921 until his death in 1957. His life's works were translating the most important of Baha'ullah's scriptures into English, interpreting and explaining Baha'i teachings, building the organizational system, and overseeing the spread of the Baha'i Faith worldwide.

In *Ten Religions of the East* (1978), Edward Rice explains that the Bab's original doctrines and mystical, ecstatic view of a new age have undergone a gradual diminution as they have moved from the Middle East to the West. "No longer are mystical, ritual or theological beliefs paramount; instead simplicity, social-mindedness and positive thinking are stressed. The primary vision is one of God, even though men may call Him by different names, and of one world attained through a world religion – that is, through the Baha'i Faith."

It is the second most widely spread religion in the world today, with 5 million members residing in 232 countries and dependent territories, and national spiritual assemblies (national Baha'i governing bodies) in 172. The majority of the Baha'i community, living by and promulgating actively the Baha'i teachings, believe that Baha'u'llah is god's messenger for this day. They do not usually have weekly worship services; rather, a monthly program called *feast*; it includes worship, consultation on community business, and social activities. The moral and spiritual principles set forth by Baha'u'llah are:

1. Racial unity
2. Emancipation of women
3. Economic justice
4. Patriotism within a global perspective
5. Universal education
6. A universal auxiliary language
7. The environment and development
8. The world's federal system
9. Religious dialogue

The Baha'i scriptures tell us that the problems humanity faces today are because of two things: humanity did not except or act on moral and spiritual values given them by God's messenger's to solve age-old problems, and because of the creation of a global society is bringing about new challenges, but can be solved if the moral and spiritual principles enunciated by Baha'u'llah are accepted and followed.

Historical Dates

1819 – 1851	Life of Bab
1817	Baha'u'llah born

1844 – 1921	Life of ‘Abdu’l-Baha
1897 – 1957	Life of Shoghi Effendi Rabbani
1894	First Western converts come into the movement

Feasts, Anniversaries and Days of Fasting

The Badi’ Calendar

Baha (Splendour)	March 21 st
Jalal (Glory)	April 9 th
Jamal (Beauty)	April 28 th
‘Azmat (Grandeur)	May 17 th
Nur (Light)	June 5 th
Rahmat (Mercy)	June 24 th
Kalimat (Words)	July 13 th
Kamal (Perfection)	August 1 st
Asma (Names)	August 20 th
Izzat (Might)	September 8 th
Mashiyyat (Will)	September 27 th
Ilm (Knowledge)	October 16 th
Qudrat (Power)	November 4 th
Qawl (Speech)	November 23 rd
Masa’il (Questions)	December 12 th
Sharaf (Honour)	December 31 st
Sultan (Sovereignty)	January 19 th
Mulk (Dominion)	February 7 th
Ala (Loftiness)	March 2 nd
Ayyam-I-Ha (intercalary days): 26 February to 1 March inclusive	
New Year (Naw – Ruz)	March 21 st
Feast of Ridvan (Declaration of Baha’ Allah)	April 21 st to May 2 nd 1863
Declaration of the Bab	May 23 rd 1844
Ascension of Baha’ Allah	May 29 th 1892
Martyrdom of the Bab	July 9 th 1850
The Day of Covenant	November 26 th
Ascension of ‘Abd al-Baha	November 28 th 1921

Christianity

Christianity and Islam are the two largest religions in the world. It is a toss-up as to which one is the largest, or has the most practitioners. Most Christians do not actually have much knowledge of the origins of their religion. In fact, Christianity almost did not become a religion at all. It nearly slipped by the wayside, but Paul, one of the New Testament’s main characters, was absolutely integral in making Christianity a bona fide religion. He was an avid writer and a convincing speaker. First, however, let’s look at some of Christianity’s beginnings. Many of these stories may be quite familiar to some, but just in case, let’s go over them for those who are not familiar with Christianity. Please keep in mind that these are only a few of the characters in the story of Jesus, and in no way covers everything that should be known about Christianity. More information is covered in the UMS course *Christian Studies*.

John the Baptist

John the Baptist was agent forerunner to Christ, named Baptist because the people flocked to him in order to receive the ritual of baptism, even though he was in the wilderness and difficult to get to. He spoke avidly of the coming messiah who was to become the Christ, that God himself was sending his own son to Earth to help us live a better way. He attracted attention from some political higher-ups, and to make a long story short, he was beheaded at the request of a wife of a powerful political figure.

Jesus’ Birth and His Parents

Jesus lived for only 33 years, but he certainly had a deep impact on the religious nature of mankind over the past 2000 years. Jesus’ mother was named Mary and his supposedly earthly father was named Joseph. Mary

was said to have experienced Immaculate Conception, which means that she conceived a child by the grace of spirit rather than by intercourse with a physical man. She was in trouble, however, for an unmarried woman to have a child was highly sinful in those days, and she was in danger of being stoned for the crime. Joseph was willing to save her, married her, and took her from the town where her life was in danger. They traveled during her entire pregnancy and did not stop anywhere for very long. Finally, one evening in the town of Bethlehem, the night of Jesus' birth was to come. However, there was no room at any of the inns in the town. Joseph and Mary were lucky to be able to sleep in someone's barn.

Jesus was born that night in the barn. Three kings from the Orient came to visit him, for they had been told even before Jesus' birth that he was a special child to whom they would want to pay homage. He signified the birth of a new era to them. The birth of Jesus Christ has become a national holiday in some countries and it is called Christmas.

Jesus' First 30 years

For the first 30 years Jesus was not visible, for the most part, except for a short appearance in a synagogue reading the scriptures when he was 12. After that, there is some speculation that he began to travel, most particularly in India. Some people believe that Jesus studied with various gurus in India and even Tibet. It is said that he may have spent many of his late teens and possibly all of his 20's there. He did not reappear in his native culture until the age of 28. At that time he began to speak to any who would listen in the streets.

Jesus' Rise To Fame

Jesus preached that the kingdom of God is coming, and that mankind was required to prepare itself by living graciously, kindly, and gently, learning how to love one another. He did this escorted by 12 disciples who had various menial professions and gave up their trades to become helpers, traveling with Jesus. He performed healings, exorcisms of demons, walked on water, raised Lazarus from the dead, and performed all sorts of other miracles. How much of this he actually did, no one really knows, for the impulse to exaggerate magical stories was strong in the human psyche at that time. Hans-Joachim Schoeps says in *The Religions Of Mankind* (1966), "... feats attributed to Jewish and pagan miracle workers, may have been ascribed to Jesus by the mythmaking impulse in the early Christian community—certainly critical modern research has shown a good many parallels in non-Christian sources."

Jane Roberts, in *Seth Speaks* (1977), has something interesting to say about the fact that Jesus was not the only one who had the ability to carry such charisma and enlightenment, nor was he the only one who exhibited spiritual powers (for instance: walking on water, spontaneous hands-on healings). She says that Jesus was only one of many who had the same message and were teaching the same things, possibly even performing miracles. There were many travelers, according to her, who traveled to India and came back with various teachings.

Jesus' Death And Transformation

The Jewish Pharisees were quite perturbed by Jesus and his teachings, and were especially threatened by how the people loved him and followed him. The Jewish Pharisees felt that they were losing power and wanted to keep the power of having the people's trust and dependence. Jesus was teaching people that they did not need the Pharisees to mediate between themselves and God. Jesus was teaching that each person could have a personal connection with God if they only opened their minds to such an idea.

Jesus knew that he would soon die, for Jesus must have been a rather psychic and intuitive person, and he called for his disciples to have a last supper with him. Jesus spoke for the last time to his disciples, encouraging them to carry on his work. He did not tell them he knew that his death was coming. He kept this a secret for the time being. His disciple Peter said that he would stick through anything with Jesus, but Jesus told him that he would deny his name three times before dawn, which was true, for when Peter was accused at the time of Jesus' arrest of "being one of them," possibly facing crucifixion himself, he denied three times that he knew Jesus at all. Judas was also there, and would be the one who betrayed Jesus. In the middle of the supper Jesus told him to go and do what he had to do quickly. Some scholars believe that Jesus asked him to do this task, and that this might not have been a betrayal at all.

The Jewish Pharisees paid Judas, one of Jesus' closest disciples, 30 pieces of silver to reveal his location so that they could arrest him. Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss in the Garden of Gethsemane. Later, Judas hung himself, immersed in guilt. The Pharisees brought Jesus into court in front of Pontius Pilate on trumped up charges of heresy. Pontius Pilate did not really want to have Jesus crucified, but the political environment, and the possibilities for riots, and the possibility of radical revolutionaries arising, caused him to be in a difficult

position. He tried to give Jesus every way out, sending him to King Herod for judgment, but the King simply sent him back and said he found no guilt in Jesus. However, the Jewish Pharisees, insisted on Jesus's guilt. Pontius Pilate, certain that Jesus would prevail, gave the common people a choice between the life of Jesus or the life of Barabas, a well-known and incorrigible murderer. Surprisingly, the people chose to let Barabas live, to Pontius Pilate's surprise. Jesus never defended himself, hardly spoke through the whole ordeal, and voluntarily went to his death, wanting it because he knew this was what God wanted.

Jesus went through days of terrible torture and a very painful death, nailed to a cross. Many of his followers did not understand why he did not defend himself or rise to the occasion and put his enemies down. His disciples feared for their lives, and were silent. However, Jesus proceeded to allow his death to take place without a fight, as if he knew that he was supposed to die for a reason. He had a moment of self-doubt before Judas betrayed him in the Garden of Gethsemane, but at that time he came to realize that this was his destiny, and it was the will of God, his Father.

Three days after his death he appeared, risen from the dead, to his remaining 11 disciples and a few others, reassuring them that life went on and that he was fine in his father's hands. The death he experienced was not an end. In fact it was an incredible beginning of one of the major religions of the world.

Mother Mary

She was Jesus' mother, who bore him through the immaculate conception. She is mentioned here to help clear up any confusion there might be between her and Mary Magdalene, another woman with the same first name who played a much different role in Jesus' life.

Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene was believed to be a temple prostitute, which was a profession many women were in at that time, who became one of Jesus' followers. She was about to be stoned to death by people in her town, and Jesus stepped in and saved her life. He challenged the crowd about their own sins by saying, "He who has never sinned may cast the first stone." When everyone left in shame, he told Mary to sin no more. She was very devout, washed Jesus' feet, and accompanied his entourage to various towns. She was scorned by many who thought she was not qualified to be in Jesus' company because of her previous occupation as a prostitute. However, Jesus used this as an opportunity to teach compassion and forgiveness of others.

The Christian Church

Jesus never intended to found a church, nor did he have a plan or a vision for organized religion. He was actually a very simple man and was well received by the common people because he harbored a message of hope. Many of the common people could not afford the sacrifices and other such rituals that needed to be done at the temples. Jesus gave them a simple religion that did not cost them anything. Many of the people who followed Jesus' teachings were the folks who could not afford to practice the Jewish religion, nor could they remember all the rules and laws the Jewish religion prescribed for its followers. For instance, the Jewish religion had rules about what to eat, how it can be served, what day it could be eaten and other such detailed observances. Jesus' teachings were much simpler: love God, know that you are loved *by* God, and love your neighbor. He taught people how to bypass the need for priests and others such mediators between a person and God. According to Jesus no rituals were necessary to be in God's favor.

Many people did not agree with Jesus' teachings. Many believed that those who were suffering deserved it for some reason or another and should not be forgiven. Others felt that the Jewish laws and rules for worship were to be followed with no deviance whatsoever. Others did not trust him because he did not hate his enemies, and they thought there might be something wrong with this man. Some were angry with him because he was not a forceful messiah who would come to help them usurp the powers that were oppressive to them. However, Jesus encouraged them to realize, according to Floyd H. Ross and Tymnet Hills in their book *The Great Religions By Which Men Live* (1961), "A man's inner life is not determined by occupying armies, by exact following of laws, or by large offerings at the temple. The thought you have before you speak is more important than what you say. The attitude you have underneath your act is more important than what you do... People must discover their capacity for goodness and begin to live in the right way... They must leave their old ways of living behind and henceforth choose to live righteously, by the will of God. Then the kingdom of God would come. God was ready. Men must be, too."

These are the humble teachings that started the Christian Church. The Christian Church as it is today differs greatly from the simple teachings that Jesus proclaimed. Many sects have created numerous rules and

dogmas that Jesus never spoke of while he was alive. Jesus' teachings were never meant to become part of the Jewish religion that he was raised with. Even so, it was a long time before the Jewish Christians would allow non-Jews to be part of their circles. Some early Christians insisted that only Jewish people were qualified to practice Christianity. Later, Paul persuaded the early Christians to allow "Gentiles" (non Jewish people) into the practice of Christianity.

Paul

Paul did not have a personal relationship with Jesus, and did not know him while he was alive. Paul experienced Jesus in a vision that blinded him on the road to Damascus. Jesus summoned him to the service of discipleship.

Paul was the man most responsible for the turn of beliefs that Christianity took. He brought a unique brand of Christianity to the popular mystical religions that were scattered throughout the Mediterranean lands. These and Greek cults worshipped a lord called Kyrios, a God who had become a man, died, and rose again, a very similar story to that of Jesus. These were parallel religions. The idea conveyed is that a man can die to the body, or the ego, and rise again as the divine self. This was the idea behind the parallel religions, and it is also the idea behind accepting Jesus Christ as a savior, dying to the will of the self, and becoming the divine human, or the eternal self that is not human and cannot die. Jesus' story was acceptable to those in mystical religions because it paralleled a story they already treasured.

The ideas of Paul became the fundamental doctrines and teachings of the Christian faith and the basis of Christian dogma. Paul was the one who emphasized that Jesus' voluntary death to expiate man's sins opened the path to God. He taught that a new era had begun, the messiah had come, and now the world awaited and prepared for his return. Paul actually thought that Jesus *would* return within forty years, actually in his own lifetime, but Christ did not return and has not up to this day. More realistic predictions were made by those who remembered that Jesus said he would return in 2000 years, right around the present time in this day and age. Most Christians are quite aware of this and are excitedly anticipating what is called "the rapture." Based on Paul's insistence on keeping Christianity alive, a religion was born. Hans-Joachim Schoeps says in *The Religions Of Mankind* (1966), "Thus the church rose, and Jesus, who in his lifetime had only gathered a band of disciples around him, became the founder of a religion."

In the present day, there are so many denominations of Christianity that they are too numerous to go into in this course, and each of these denominations have their own interpretations of the Bible, their own sets of rules and codes of ethics, and their own rituals. These denominations include Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Protestant, Puritan, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Unitarian... to name a few. There are hundreds of denominations, some well known and practiced by many, and some not so well known and practiced only by a few. Christianity continues to be open to new denominations.

Confucianism

Confucianism is actually a philosophy of a way of life, but many people consider it a religion. The tradition derives its name from Kung Fu Tzu, or Confucius. Confucius met Lao-tsu (551 - 479 B.C.), a great educator and philosopher. As the legend goes, we are told in *The Great Religions By Which Men Live* (1956) by the authors Floyd H. Ross and Tynette Hills, "...When Lao-tsu was very old he was visited by a scholarly young man from a nearby province...who was concerned with the quality of life in China. He believed that back in the Golden Age people had lived better lives and the country as a whole was more prosperous. That young man was Confucius, and he arrived at those beliefs with much study and research into the ancient literature of China. As he collected and translated the classics, he found what he considered to be clues to the happier life of the earlier days... Both Lao-tsu and Confucius were concerned with the social and moral weaknesses of their generation."

In *A Sourcebook in Asian Philosophy* (1991), by John M. Koller and Patricia Koller, the origins of Confucianism are explained further: "The Confusion vision, which has tended to dominate Chinese thought, finds its first recorded expression in the early Chou classics compiled before the sixth century B.C. This vision, especially as revealed through the *Book of Documents* and *The Book of Poetry*, was renewed and transmitted by Confucius (551-479 B.C.) through his teachings. These teachings were then transmitted by successive generations of Confucianists, undergoing various modifications along the way, so that when we speak of Confucianism it is to an entire tradition rather than the thought of one person that we refer." Confucius also did many things in his life that he was less known for such as his roles as a researcher, statesman, social planner, social innovator, and advocate.

The text the *Doctrine of the Mean* is the law of the middle way; here Huston Smith is quoted from his book *The Religions of Man* (1958): “So important was the *Doctrine of the Mean* in Confucius’ vision of the good life that an entire book by that title is an important part of the Confucian canon.” The Mean is the way that is “constantly in the middle” between life’s extremes. It is described as so because in Chinese the two words for ‘Mean’ are *chung* and *yung*, literally “middle” and “constant.” The *Doctrine of the Mean’s* guiding principle is “nothing in excess” and it’s the closest Western equivalent is the *Golden Mean* of Aristotle. To expand on the idea of the Mean, Huston Smith remarks, “Following the Mean brings harmony and balance. It disposes men to compromise, and issues in a becoming reserve. Never plunging to extremes, toward pure values ‘equally removed from enthusiasm as from indifference,’ China’s regard for the Mean has come out in her recoil from everything approaching fanaticism.”

Confucian’s philosophical method is offered as a means to transform the people of the world into a harmonious international society. The Confucian system is based on several principles:

1. In the beginning, there's nothing.
2. Tao is The Great Ultimate and it exists in the *I* (change). The Great Ultimate is the cause of change and generates the two primary forms: the Great *Yang* (a great energy) and its counterforce, the Great *Yin* (a passive form). *Yang* and *Yin* symbolized the energy within any system of counterforce as: positive and negative, day and night. *Yin* and *Yang* are complementary; in their interaction, everything—from quanta to galaxies—comes to be. Everything that exists, coexists in an interdependent network with all other systems.
3. The dynamic tension between *Yin* and *Yang* forces results in an endless process of change—of production and reproduction and the transformation of energy. This is a natural order, an order in which we can see basic moral values. Human nature is inherently good. If the human being goes along with the Great Ultimate and engages in rigorous self-discipline, the person will discover the real self (the nature of Tao) and can enjoy the principal of change. And since all systems exist in an interdependent network, one who knows this truth also cares.
4. There are four principles of change:
 - a. Change is easy.
 - b. Change is a transforming process due to the dynamics between *Yin* and *Yang*. Any change in either part believed to change in the system and related systems. This process has its own cycle of expansion and contraction.
 - c. Change carries with it the notion of changelessness; that there is change is a fact that is itself unchanging.
 - d. The best transformation promotes the growth and development of the individual and the whole simultaneously—it strives for excellence for all systems in the network.
5. Any search for change should consider the following:
 - a. The status of the object in the interdependent network—that is, what is the system and what are this object’s role, position, rights, and duties in the system?
 - b. Timing within the interrelated network—that is, is this the right time to initiate change?
 - c. The mean position or the Golden Path in the interrelated network situation; the mean position is regarded as the most strategic position from which one can deal with change. Tao (*Truth*) exists in the mean (*Chung*).
 - d. The respondents of *Yin* and *Yang* forces—that is, are the counter forces willing to dialogue or compromise?
 - e. The integration between the parts and the whole—that is, the system and its economic, political and cultural realms.
6. There is an interconnected network of individual existence, and this pattern of interdependent relationships exist in all levels of systems, from individual, through family and state, to the whole world. The whole is dependent upon harmonious integration of all the parts, or subsystems, while the parts require the nurture of the whole. The ultimate unit within this framework is the universe itself. Self is a here-and-now link in a chain of existence stretching both into the past and into a future to be shaped by the way an individual performs his or her roles in daily life. One's humanity is achieved only with and through others.

Individual and social transformations are based on self-cultivation, the personal effort to search for truth and to become a life-giving person. Searching for and finding the truth will lead to originality, the creative ability to solve problems, and development. The process will also enable individuals and systems to be life-giving and life-sharing—to process a *Jen* (love) personality. Wisdom, love, and courage are inseparable concepts.

Organizational effectiveness and efficiency are reached when systematically interconnected individuals or subsystems find the truth—and stay with it. Existence consists of the interconnected whole. Methods that assume and take into account connections work better than methods that focus on isolated elements. Organizational effectiveness can be improved through a rearrangement of the relationships between the parts and the whole.

In other words, a balanced and harmonious development within the interdependent network is the most beneficial state for all. Self-actualizing and collective goals should always be integrated. These principles of Confucian social transformation are drawn primarily from *I Ching*, *The Great Learning*, *Confucian Analects*, and *The Doctrine Of The Mean*. In *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000), is an article by Dr. Douglas K. Chung titled *A Portrait*, states, “In contemporary terms, Confucianism can be defined as a school of social transformation that is research oriented and that employs a multidimensional, cross-cultural, and comprehensive approach that is applicable to both Micro and macro systems. It is a way of life—or an art of living—that aims to synchronize the systems of the universe to achieve both individual and collective fulfillment.”

In *The Great Religions By Which Men Live* (1956) by Floyd H. Ross and Tynette Hills, we learn about the Five Constant Virtues: “Confucius was concerned with creating a guideline for proper conduct and right living for the ordinary man. He described ‘a superior man’ or ‘a princely man.’ He came up with a set of rules and steps for becoming that man.

“The Five Constant Virtues:

1. **Right Attitude:** an inner law of self-control, cooperatives and accommodating to others.
2. **Right Procedure:** knowing the proper etiquette and using that proper etiquette in every social situation.
3. **Right Knowledge:** education is of the utmost importance, not only of secular matters but also spiritual matters.
4. **Right Moral Courage:** developed courage to remain loyal to one's morals, even in the face of others who attempt to get one to act immorally.
5. **Right Persistence:** constancy is important, being consistently kind and helpful, doing the right thing at the right time always.”

Also from Floyd H. Ross and Tynette Hills' book, we learn that in Confucianism is the belief that there is an inherent purity and goodness in every person: “Confucianists often speak of ‘perfect humanity.’ It can be achieved by a person because of something the Confucianists believe to be present within each person, even at birth. This is a native goodness or kindly love that can be developed through feelings of helpfulness toward others... When a man has educated himself to be a superior man, he can be kind, helpful, and good. The seed of goodness within him makes these qualities possible.”

There are two major schools of Neo-Confucianism that have emerged: the rationalists, who focus much more on the “inner world” (philosophy), and the idealists, who emphasize more on practical learning in the “outer world” (social science). The leading exponent of the rationalists was Chu His (1033-1107 C.E.) and that of the idealists was Wang Yang-Ming (1472-1529 C.E.). Lee T'oebye (1501-1570) led Neo-Confucianism in Korea, and taught a philosophy of inner life and moral subjectivity.

In *Great Learning*, taken from the *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000), editor Joel Beversluis, Confucius prescribed seven steps in a general strategy of social transformation to achieve the ideal society:

1. The investigation of things (variables): Find out the way things are and how they are related.
2. The completion of knowledge: Find out why things are the way they are; that is, why the dependent variable was related to other variables. This is the reality of things, the truth, *Tao*. And since everything exists in an interrelated network, discovering this truth empowers a person to transform his or her attitude.
3. The sincerity of thought: One should be sincere in wanting to change or to set goals that are a commitment to excellence and the truth, *Tao*, which is the source of self-motivation, the root of self-actualization and the cornerstone of adequate I-Thou and I-Thing relationships. The most complete sincerity is the ability to foreknow.

4. The rectifying of the heart: The motivation for change must be the right one, good for the self as well as for the whole. It is a cultivation aimed at virtue, a moral self achieved through the intuitive integration of *Jen* (humanity, benevolence, perfect virtue, compassion, and love), *Yi* (righteousness), *Li* (politeness, respect), and wisdom (from steps 1, 2, and 3). Only such a self has real freedom—from evil, and to have moral courage and the ability to be good.

5. The cultivation of the person: There must be lifelong integration between the “knowledge self” (steps 1 and 2) and the “moral self” (steps 3 and 4) through self-discipline (education) and self-improvement. This is the key to helping self and others.

6. The regulation of the family: One should show self-discipline within the family by honoring parents, respect in caring for siblings, and loving children. One should understand the weaknesses of those one likes and appreciate the strengths of those one dislikes to avoid prejudice and disharmony in the family.

7. The governance of the state: The state must provide public education, set policies to care for vulnerable people, root policies in public opinions, appoint and elect capable and moral persons as public officials, and apply management principles based on the Mean and the Golden Path. This sort of public administration should lead to the harmonious state.

Seeking the truth through these seven steps is a self-cultivating discipline. Confucius described the ideal welfare state in *Li Chi (The Book of Rites)* from the *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000) as follows: “When the Grand course was pursued, a public and common spirit ruled all under the sky; they chose people of talents, virtue, and ability; their words were sincere, and what they cultivated was harmony.

“Thus people did not love their parents only, not treat as children only their own. An effective provision was secured for the aged till their death, employment for the able-bodied, and the means of growing up for the young.” Confucius did not wish to change much about the religious beliefs of his day; he did not even really speak on them. Floyd H. Ross and Tynette Hills describe this in *The Great Religions By Which Men Live* (1956), “...he simply accepted them as they were—insofar as they served society. He was not in the least interested in popular religious ideas or customs that ignored common experiences and knowledge. He did not like to speak of the spirits that so many people worshipped out of superstition and fear... To him, it was a waste of time to concern yourself with anything you could not definitely know... Confucius is not concerned with ideas about God and other problems in theology. But he had a real devotion to the ancient religious ceremonies, because he believed that they help to build the habits and attitudes necessary for proper conduct. His personal religion was limited to reverence of ancestors, the moral life of the five constant virtues, and recognition and reverence of a just heaven above.”

The Chinese value the religious freedom that they have become accustomed to, for this reason the efforts to establish Confucianism as a state religion have failed. The idea of a single state religion offended the Chinese. Another reason this idea hasn't worked is stated in Floyd H. Ross and Tynette Hills' book *The Great Religions By Which Men Live* (1956), “...[the Chinese] seemed unwilling to turn Confucianism into a religion like Taoism and Buddhism...new political movements in China have sometimes blamed Confucianism and Confucius for many of the ills of Chinese society. This is partly due to their attempt to discredit old traditions and beliefs, in order to bring in new ideas of government and education. Today, Confucius does not hold the same respected place in the memories and the history of his people.” One could definitely say, however, Confucius was a very progressive thinker for his time – with his ideas of governmental support for the elderly and the young.

Important Historical Dates

551 – 479 B.C.	Life of Confucius
1033 – 1107 C.E.	Life of Chu His, one of the greatest of all Chinese thinkers
1501 – 1570	Life of Lee T'oegye leader of Neo – Confucianism in Korea

Jainism

There are around 10 million followers of Jainism, or the Jain Dharm. It originated on the Indian subcontinent, and is one of the oldest religions in the world. It has prehistoric origins before 3,000 B.C.E, before the propagation of Indo-Aryan culture. In *A Handbook of Living Religions* (1984), Kendall W. Folkert, tells us: “[Jains] continue to be a visible and active community, holding tenaciously to a rigorous discipline whose roots pre-date Buddha.”

It is an eternal philosophy, offered to anyone willing to improve upon their lives. It can help with rational conduct in stressful situations and tranquil ones. It is described in *A Sourcebook in Asian Philosophy* (1991), by John M. Koller and Patricia Koller, as "...a way of compassion and ascetic self-restraint designed to liberate the soul (*jiva*) from the bondage of karmic matter. Existence is without beginning or end, with no God or initial act of creation recognized. Liberation is possible only through human effort, as exemplified by Mahavira and the other Jinas [spiritual conquerors] who, by teaching and example, have shown the way."

Jainas follow the teachings of the Twenty-four Crossing-makers (Jinas) or the "ford-builders" (*Tirthankaras*) because they guided the evolution and elaboration of the religion. They showed the way to cross the great ocean of suffering. The first *Tirthankara* of the present declining era was Lord Rishabhanath, and the last was Lord Mahavira (599-527 B.C.E).

This religion shows a spiritual way of life to its followers and has inspired a culturally distinct stream that has enriched much philosophy, art, literature, architecture, democratic living, and spiritual advancement in the land of India. Classical Jain literature is found in the Sanskrit, Prakrit, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Kannada, and Tamil languages, and in varied forms of poetry, prose, drama, and story. It can also be traced back to the lands of Greece and Israel in its influence.

The Jain society is not based on male dominance or caste. It is a system that neither denies the existence of the soul, nor starts with the presupposition of a creator. Each person is the master of his or her own destiny; it affirms the immortality of every soul and insists that the highest rectitude of life, unto final perfection, is a necessary means to permanent happiness now and hereafter. It is, most importantly, a religion of the heart: the golden rule is *Ahimsa*, nonviolence by all faculties—mental, verbal, and physical. An excerpt from the *Acharanga Sutra* (1:4:1) explains this further, "The Arhats and Bhagavats of the past, present and future all say thus, speak thus, declare thus, explain thus: All breathing, existing, living, sentient creatures should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused nor tormented, nor driven away. This is the pure, unchangeable, eternal law, which the clever ones, who understand the world, have declared: among the zealous and the not zealous, among the faithful and the not faithful, among the not cruel and the cruel, among those who have worldly weakness and those who have not, among those who like social bonds and those who do not: 'that is the truth, that is so, that is proclaimed in this (creed).'"

They are strict vegetarians because they believe in compassion for all living beings, *Jiva Daya*. In *Ten Religions of the East* (1984) Edward Rice says, "Jainism is possibly the only faith in the world to take seriously the injunction not to kill. Though virtually every religion has such a prohibition, an amazing number of loopholes are always found to negate the commandment. Even Hinduism, so strict in many ways, allows people of certain castes to serve as warriors, or to kill animals or eat flesh meats. Few Hindus are as scrupulous as the Jains in not injuring harmless insects. Though the majority of Buddhists are strict about not killing animals, as well as people, others either ignore the prohibition (as do the Tibetans and the tantrics) or merely observe them when practical, the Japanese being a noted example."

In the *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000), an article "A Portrait," written by Amar T. Salgia, explains, "Jain religion has a clearly articulated scientific basis that elucidates the properties and qualities of animate and inanimate substances which make up the cosmos: their interrelationship is described in terms of evolution and growth of monads (like atoms), molecules, nonmaterial continuums, and souls. Jainism sets forth the existence of two fundamental categories of existing entities: *Jiva* and *Ajiva*, soul and non-soul. The non-soul "substances" are time, space, *pudgal* (the continuum of matter and energy), and the media of motion and rest."

Shinto

Shinto is the indigenous national religion of Japan. It is closely connected to the way Japanese people think, act and their value systems; it is more prominent in the people's social lives and their personal motivations than being a firmly established theology or philosophy. Floyd H. Ross says in his book *The Great Religions By Which Men Live* (1956), "There are many people who think that Shinto...no longer exists, or that it is rapidly declining. They think it began to decline with Japan's surrender in the Second World War. But traditional beliefs and customs have a way of living on. It is never possible to decree or legislate faith out of existence."

Modern Shinto is roughly classified into three types: Shrine Shinto, Sectarian Shinto, and Folk Shinto.

Shrine Shinto constitutes a main current of Shinto tradition and has been in existence from the prehistoric times to the present. It included State Shinto within its structure until the end of 1945 and still has close relations with the emperor system.

Sectarian Shinto is based on the Japanese religious tradition and is a relatively new movement. The thirteen major sects that originated in Japan around the 19th century represent it. The thirteen sects each have either a founder or systematizer who organized the religious body. In Japan after World War II there appeared new Shinto sects and they are conveniently included in this type.

Folk Shinto, as stated by Naofusa Hirai in the *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000), is "...an aspect of Japanese folk belief closely related to Shinto. It has neither a firmly organized religious body nor any doctrinal formulas, and includes small roadside images, agricultural rites of individual families, and so on. These three types of Shinto are interrelated: Folk Shinto exists as the substructure of Shinto faith, and a Sectarian Shinto follower is usually a parishioner of a certain shrine of Shrine Shinto at the same time." The majority of Japanese people often practice Buddhism and Shrine Shinto simultaneously. There are about 10 million Sectarian Shintoists.

In Japanese mythology there is a divine couple named Izanagi (the Sky Father) and Izanami (the Earth Mother) who are the parents of Amaterasu Omikami (the Sun Goddess). She is the ancestress of the Imperial Family. At the center of these myths are the stories of how her direct descendants unified the nation under her authority. It begins that her parents give birth to the Japanese islands and the deities who become the ancestors to various clans. There is a common inclination from ancient Japanese times to see nature as offspring from the same parents of humans. The legend tells of when Amaterasu gave over the ruling of Japan to her grandson and presented him with the three most sacred objects in the Shinto religion. In their book *The Great Religions By Which Men Live* (1956) Floyd H. Ross and Tynette Hills explain these symbols "The imperial jewels, which are kept in the Tokyo palace, are symbols of obedience and gentleness. The sword, kept in the shrine at Owari, represents wisdom and justice. And the mirror, housed in the Ise shrine, symbolizes righteousness and purity."

Shintoists believe human nature to be sacred because humanity was born from *kami* (the deities). They have a saying, "man is *kami's* child." This indicates that each *kami* has a divine personality and will respond to sincere prayers. Shintoists emphasize belief in many deities and their doctrine does not reject other religions. They believe that *kami* dwell in nature and give thanks for the blessings of nature. Expanding upon this is a quote from *The Great Religions By Which Men Live* (1956), by Floyd H. Ross and Tynette Hills, "The Japanese believed that the same wonderful forces that move in nature move in themselves. There is no difference. There is no dividing line between Divine and human. For this reason, a person's religion and his life have entered into each other so that it is almost impossible to tell where one begins and the other ends. Those who claimed that Shinto is not a religion are probably confused by this tendency. To the thoughtful Japanese, this is as it should be."

The short poetry that the Japanese are known for is just descriptive enough for the reader to feel what is trying to be conveyed. Here is an example of nature poetry that shows their connection to nature. This is also from Floyd H. Ross and Tynette Hills' book:

"On the plum blossoms

Thick fell the snow;

I wished to gather some to show thee,

But it melted in my hands.

Another verse reads as follows:

To what shall I compare

This life of ours?

It is like a boat

Which at daybreak rows away

And leaves no trace behind it."

A further description of the Shinto religions is quoted from Floyd H. Ross' book as well: "The Shinto religion has no list of Commandments, no set of moral roles to be followed. More than 150 years ago one Japanese scholar wrote: 'it is because the Japanese were truly moral in their practice that they required no theory of morals, and the fuss made by the Chinese about theoretical morals is owing to their laxity in practice.'... Since the Japanese feel that human beings are really good, they have never worried about being sinful. Men may make mistakes, which might be called "sins," but they are not *full* of sin... The Japanese find life very good, and they're glad to except it as it is. They are not inclined to question it. They take life in a more joyous way than the followers of some religions. Even Buddhists in Japan do not dwell at much length on life's sorrows. Shintoists feel at home in the world. They believe that the Gods desire their happiness and well-being. Life is good, and men are good. How could it be otherwise, when the gods have created them?"

Floyd H. Ross also tells us about the cleansing ceremony that the Japanese follow before visiting a shrine. "A Japanese does not approach a shrine, whether in his own home or in a public place, without first going through a ceremony of cleansing. There are special water troughs near the public shrines, from which a worshipper may dip the water for washing his hands and rinsing his mouth. Only after he has purified himself in this way does he think himself worthy to worship at the shrine. The thoughtful Japanese realize that this is a symbol of inner purity, which is not really dependent on outward cleansing."

Historical Highlights

CE 5	National shrine at Ise built	CE 1939	Japanese Department of Education controls all religious bodies
CE 712	Kojiki written	CE 1945	World War II: Japan surrenders and Shintoism is disestablished
CE 720	Nihongi		
CE 1730-1801	Life of Motoori Norinaga, Shinto Resistance leader		

Major Festivals

Oshogatsu (New Year)	1-3rd January	Tango nu Sekku (Boys' Festival)	5 th of May
Ohinamatsuri (Dolls' or Girls' Festival)	3 rd of March	Hoshi matsuri/Tanabata (Star Festival)	7 th of July

Some Key Terms

Ise Shrine One of the most important Shinto shrines. The sun goddess is enshrined there.

Kami The Kami are forces and deities in the Shinto faith that pervade everything, supernatural gods and natural people and things.

Kami-Dana A shelf or altar often found in Japanese homes and gardens that has objects on it that are dedicated to the gods and family ancestors.

Norito A prayer.

Humanism

Humanism can be described as a living and growing faith. You could label it as a philosophical movement or a worldview, but either way it really reflects inclinations found in many modern and postmodern societies. Humanism denies the existence of supernatural or transcendent realities because it can find no evidence of them or any credibility to the idea that life survives after the death of the body. In *A World Religions Reader* (1997), Ian S. Markham, editor, explains their thinking, "Perhaps the reason [why] God didn't make things clearer [how to decide which religion is true] is because this God does not exist. Religion reflects an age when the mysteries of nature required an explanation. Why is it that one year we had a good harvest and the next a bad one? The answer was that an invisible being was either blessing or punishing the people. But now we have scientific explanations for these natural mysteries. The God hypothesis is no longer required."

Their publications critique abuses by religions, sometimes very appropriately. But there are also those who label themselves religious humanists. Some may even join churches and societies for fellowship and to affirm meaning and ethical commitments. One might not classify Humanism as a religion or spiritual tradition, in general because of its criticism of religion and its denial of other transcendent realities, but there is an element of spirituality for some Humanists.

Tracing its roots from ancient China, classical Greece and Rome, and from the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, through to the scientific revolution of the modern world, humanism is not equivalent to just any view that rejects theisms. That kind of view is different from humanism because it does not necessarily have a commitment to the positive belief in the possibilities of human progress that humanism does.

They believe their set of common principles can serve as a basis for united action; they are positive principles that are thought to be relevant to the present human condition. In the *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000), edited by Joel Beversluis, humanism is described as, "...an ethical process through which we can all move, above and beyond the divisive particulars, heroic personalities, dogmatic creeds, and ritual customs of past religions or their mere negation... we reject those features of traditional religious morality that deny humans a full appreciation of their own potentialities and responsibilities... humans are responsible for what we are or will become... No deity will save us; we must save ourselves." Humanists believe that reason and intelligence are very effective tools, the most effective that humankind possesses, and there is no substitute; neither passion nor faith suffices by themselves. Being non-theists, they hold that the beginning is with humans not God, nature not deity.

A central humanist value is that every individual is precious; each person should be encouraged to cultivate creative talents and explore desires. Any religion, ideology, or moral code that denigrates the individual, suppresses freedom, works to dull intellect, or dehumanizes personality, is rejected. Humanists want those orthodox religions and puritanical cultures that have intolerant attitudes, and want to unduly repress sexual conduct, to recognize the right to abortion, divorce and birth control. They do not want the law to prohibit sexual behavior between two consenting adults. Society should be tolerant as long as the behavior is not totally unbridled promiscuousness. Humanists want to help society develop a responsible attitude toward sexuality that does not exploit humans as sexual objects. Encouraging intimacy, respect, sensitivity and honesty in interpersonal relationships, also, enhancing freedom and dignity, each individual should have the right to experience civil liberties such as freedom of speech in the press, fair judicial process, religious liberty, and cultural freedom in art and in science.

They believe in the individual's right to die with dignity, euthanasia, and the right to suicide. They disagree with democratic and totalitarian societies that are increasingly invading this privacy. They want to implement, extend and safeguard the human freedoms that evolved from the *Bill of Rights*, to the *Magna Carta*, the *Rights of Man*, and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. They want to extend participatory democracy to all parts of society such as schools and the economy, the workplace and voluntary associations, with involvement from people of all levels of politics, and economic standings.

Humanists have a vision of moral equality—eliminating all forms of discrimination. And of a society that provides a means of income and health care for individuals who are disadvantaged or have become outcasts, such as the mentally retarded, abandoned, or abused children, the handicapped, prisoners, and addicts—culturally, any people who have been neglected or ignored by society. There has to be a willingness to step forward onto these new and expanding plateaus. They believe that this can be the future of humankind if we transcend the narrow allegiances of church, state, party, class or race and move toward this wider vision of human potentiality.

Historical Dates

1564-1642	Galileo
1632	Persecution of Galileo by the Roman Catholic Church
1809-82	Charles Darwin
1818-83.1	Karl Marx
1856-1939	Sigmund Freud
1858-1917	Emilie Durkheim
1866	Formation of the National Secular Society in England
1872-1970	Bertrand Russell
1960-present	Rise of the Feminist Movement
1963	Publication of John Robinson's <i>Honest to God</i>
1988	Publication of Salman Rushdie's <i>Satanic Verses</i>
1988	Fatwa issued against Salman Rushdie

Key Terms

Agnosticism The viewpoint that there is insufficient evidence on which to make any decisions regarding the existence of God.

Baha'i Faith A religion arising out of Islam and founded in the nineteenth century, which stresses the oneness of humankind.

Cosmology The study of the universe.

Atheism The belief that there is no ultimate reality.

Sociology The systematic study of the functioning, organization and development of human society.

Taoism

A contemporary of Confucius started Taoism. Li Erh (6th century B.C.E.), commonly known as Lao Tzu (the Old Master) was the keeper of the imperial library. When he disappeared to the west in his old age he left behind him the *Tao Te Ching* (*Book of Tao and Virtue* or *The Way and Its Power*) which became the central text of

Taoism. This book is used to guide the cultivation of the self as well as a political manual for social change. Only five thousand words in length, it is where Taoism derived its name. The philosophy of the Yellow emperor, Huang-Ti, and his belief in immortals can be traced as the beginnings of Taoism. That is why Taoism is sometimes referred to as the "Huang-Lao" philosophy.

Edward Rice tells the legend behind the Lao-tzu in his book *Ten Religions of the East* (1978): "By all signs Lao Tzu was a crusty old individual who tolerated no interference in his very private way of life. In his old age, conditions in his part of China reached such a bad state that he ran away from home, riding on a black ox. As he crossed the mountains into the safety of a neighboring kingdom, he was stopped by an individual known as the Keeper of the Pass, who asked him to write down the total of his knowledge... Traditionally, the work was written in two parts, one called the *Tao Ching*, the other the *Te Ching*, so the book is sometimes called the *Tao Te Ching*, though it is best known as the *Lao Tzu*. Eventually Lao Tzu, his anger at his own people abated, returned home to pass his final years in study and meditation...whether or not he actually wrote the work that bears his name is a question for scholars. The final form does not seem to have been given to the book until the second century B.C., and to experts it is clearly a compilation from several sources."

In *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000), editor Joel Beversulis, includes an article written by Dr. Douglas K. Chung about Taoism called *A Portrait*. He tells us, "Taoism believes Tao to be the cosmic, mysterious, and ultimate principle underlying form, substance, being, and change. Tao encompasses everything. It can be used to understand the universe and nature as well as the human body." Tao (pronounced "dow") means "way." The way to live is in harmony with Yin and Yang. The cause of change and the source of all nature is Tao, which includes humanity as well. The Yin and Yang forces are at the core of their beliefs. Everything that exists has two primary elements, the Yin and Yang that represent all opposites. These two forces bring harmony and balance to every system and interdependent network.

Taoists believe that we can change the destructive cycle of the Five Elements into a healthy cycle of the Five Elements through personal and social transformation. This means changing from a conflicting pattern of life into a supportive mode of life. Quoting Dr. Douglas K. Chung again: "The creative cycle of the Five Elements is this: metal in the veins of the earth nourishes the underground waters (purification); water gives life to vegetation and creates wood (nourishment); wood feeds fire to create ashes forming earth (nature recycling). The cycle is completed when metal is formed in the veins of the earth."

All life is valued in Taoism. There is no focus on life after death. The emphasis is on keeping in good health for longevity of life. One is taught to minimize desires and center on stillness. Lao Tzu promotes *chi-kung* (breathing exercises) to enhance life. Here are three life enhancing methods that he offers: 1) keeping original "oneness," integrating energy, spirit, and *chi*; 2) keeping one's vital energy maintained, trying to retain the adaptability and flexibility that a newborn has; 3) persisting in practice for longevity.

Six characteristics are the essential Taoist guidelines promoting a way of life that bring personal and social development. Quoted from the *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000), they are:

1. Determining and working with the Tao when making changes
2. Basing one's life on the *laissez faire* principle—let nature follow its own course as its guideline for change
3. Modeling one's life on the sage, on nature, and thus on the Tao
4. Emphasizing the Tao's strategy of reversal transformation
5. Focusing on simplicity and originality
6. Looking for intuitive awareness and insight and de-emphasizing rational and intellectual efforts.

A Taoist prayer taken from Floyd H. Ross' book *The Great Religions By Which Men Live* (1956), is as follows:

"Heaven is eternal, the Earth everlasting.
How come they are so? It is because they do not foster their own lives;
That is why they live so long
Therefore the Sage
Puts himself in the background; that is always to the fore
Remains outside; but is always there.
Is it just because he does not strive for any personal end
That all his personal ends are fulfilled?"

Another thought on Taoism is quoted from Chuang-Tse from the book *The Great Religions By Which Men Live* (1956), author Floyd H. Ross, "Duty is to be performed, not because a man feels obligated to do it, but more because he does not feel that he must not do it. The man of Tao would conform to the world to the extent required to cause him least difficulty in living in harmony with the Tao. It is clear that he could not live harmoniously if he were to be constantly plotting to get out of responsibility and to overthrow governments and institutions. It is clear also that he would not live harmoniously if he were constantly planning to take over larger shares of responsibility into reform or strengthen the things about him. The world is like a broth that too many cooks are about to spoil. The wise man will refuse to add any ingredients, nor to stir. He prefers to wait for a proper and natural blend. But how can we just sit back and let things happen without doing anything to help or hinder? It is difficult to do, but it is simple. It is as simple and is difficult as relaxing... A man feels a pleasurable sensation before he smiles, and smiles before he thinks how he ought to smile. Resign yourself to the proper sequence of things."

In the book *A Sourcebook in Asian Philosophy* (1991), by John M. Koller and Patricia Koller, explains, "The Taoist vision is made up of three strands. First is the emphasis on preserving oneself by skillful adaptation to circumstances and avoidance of unnecessary risks, a strand sometimes attributed to the legendary Yang Chu. A second strand emphasizes the way of natural things in their spontaneity and naturalness. A third strand is the conviction that language and conceptual thought cannot grasp the deepest truth of reality. Only through a direct and immediate realization—a mystical experiential unity—can the ultimate be known, and only through this knowledge can one be transformed by the power of the ultimate."

Key Terms

Tao The way.

Yang The male, light energy.

Yin The female, dark, mysterious energy.

Tao Te Ching The main text of Taoism from Lao Tzu.

Historical Dates

6th century B.C.E. Lao Tzu born.

Sikhism

A fairly young religion, Sikhism was founded only five hundred years ago by Guru Nanak (1439-1539). His family was descended from the ancient kings of the lunar race, thus they were Kshatriyas, members of the Hindu warrior caste and were well off. He had a revelatory experience in his mid-thirties and set out teaching throughout India, Ceylon, Tibet, and parts of the Arab world. His message was that true religion consisted of being ever-mindful of God, meditating on God's Name, and reflecting it in all activities of daily life. His followers were of both Hindu and Muslim origin, they became known as Sikhs (from the Sanskrit word *shishya*—disciple). At the time Sikhism emerged Indian society had been deeply divided because of the Muslim leaders over several centuries who had tried to compel the conversion of the "polytheistic" culture of Hinduism to monotheism. Indian society was torn apart by the tensions between Hindu and Muslims. It was in this setting that Nanak was born. In *A World Religions Reader* (1997)

Dr. Rajwant Singh and Ms. Georgia Rangel say, "[Nanak's revelation] showed that God transcended the division between Muslims and Hindus." Lt. Col. Sir John Malcolm also speaks on this in *Sketch of the Sikhs* (1812) "Born in a province on the extreme verge of India, at the very point where the religion of Muhammad and the idolatrous worship of the Hindus appeared to touch, and at a moment when both those tribes cherished the most violent rancour and animosity toward each other, his [Nanak's] great aim was to blend those jarring elements in peaceful union, and he only endeavored to effect this purpose through the means of mild persuasion. His wish was to recall both Muhammadans and Hindus to an exclusive attention to that sublimest of all principles, which inculcates devotion to God, and peace towards man. He had to combat the furious bigotry of the one and the deep-rooted superstition of the other; but he attempted to overcome all obstacles by the force of reason and humanity."

An excerpt from *Ten Religions of the East* (1978), by Edward Rice, explains the origins of the teachings of Nanak and how they came from an ancient Way: "Guru Nanak's teachings did not spring full-blown from his mind, but were the development of older doctrines and beliefs of a broad folk-based Hindu movement known as bhakti, Nanak was in the mainstream of the bhakti currents which flowed through India during the fifteenth century. Bhakti was an old, intense, deeply moving devotional Way popular among the common people of Hinduism for perhaps a thousand years or more."

Guru Nanak and his nine successors were called *gurus*, which has many meanings. In Indian traditions it is a common term for spiritual guide or teacher. In Sikhism, it is the voice of God speaking through someone,

and someone who is the embodiment of Divine Light and in the case of Guru Nanak, the light that dispels the darkness (literally, “Gu” meaning darkness and “Ru” meaning light). Gurus did not wish to be worshipped and were careful to prevent anyone doing so. The holy book that is at the heart of Sikh worship is the *Guru Granth Sahib*; it contains devotional compositions written by the Sikh *gurus*, recorded during their lifetimes. The last living *guru*, Guru Gobind Singh, declared that he was the last successor of the living gurus and from the time of his death onward the Scriptures *Guru Granth Sahib* would be the final authority for faith and conduct and take over the function of the guru as teacher. In *A Handbook of Living Religions* (1984), W. Owen Cole writes the chapter on Sikhism and he describes the *Adi Granth* by saying, “This consists of religious teachings expressed in metrical form composed by six of the Gurus, the first five and the ninth, as well as the verses of some Hindu and Muslim teachers who had a similar religious outlook... The *Adi Granth* contains no historical narratives and little explicit biographical material about the Gurus who established the Sikh faith.” In Sikhism it is venerated in the same way that the living *gurus* were. In the Sikh place of worship, the *gurdwara*, it lends its sanctity. It has been written in Sanskrit, Persian, Hindi, and Punjabi.

Sikhists believe in one god, equality of men, women and all society, and that time is cyclical, not linear. Therefore Sikhism has no eschatological belief. A symbol of this universal acceptance is the *langar*, a meal that is eaten together by the congregation, shared food becoming a social leveler. They reject asceticism and the caste system. The seminal belief in Sikhism is quoted here from the *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000) in the article called *A Portrait* by Dr. Rajwant Singh and Ms. Georgia Rangel, from the *Mool Mantra* which is the beginning of the *Guru Granth Sahib*: “There is One God. He

Is the Supreme Truth
Is without fear
Is not vindictive
Is Timeless, Eternal
Is not born, so
He does not die to be reborn.
Self-illuminated,
By Guru’s grace
He is revealed to the human soul.
Truth was in the beginning, and throughout the ages.
Truth is now and ever will be.

In Sikhism *haumai* (self-centeredness), greed, lust, pride, anger, and attachment to the passing values of people on earth is what separates us from God. *Haumai* is the source of all evil. Dr. Rajwant Singh and Ms. Georgia Rangel also tell us, “It is a person’s inclination to evil that produces the *karma* that leads to endless rebirth.” The opportunity for spiritual union with the Supreme Being, what each human life can be, is a core belief of Sikhism. If one lives a life of single-minded devotion to God, achieves a level of spiritual self-knowledge and the stage of enlightenment to become one with God, one will be freed from the cycle of death and rebirth, but only by God’s Grace, not by one’s own merit. Sikhism’s concept of salvation is to become enlightened, not redemption.

Sikhs recognize three life-cycle events: the naming of the newborn in the *gurdwara*, the marriage ceremony, and the funeral. The body is always cremated and any kind of funeral monument is forbidden. Indication of gender is not seen in Sikh names. All Sikh men, therefore, take the additional name Singh (lion) and women take the name Kaur (princess). They drop their last names so as not to indicate their caste as instructed to do by the tenth *guru*, Guru Gobind Singh. A Sikh is made a full member in the Amrit ceremony; its originated from the last human guru in 1699. The initiation involves promising to follow the Sikh code of conduct, using it as an integral part of the path toward God-realization. After this ceremony they are a part of the *Khalsa* (belonging to God) brotherhood and they will tithe their income and time, pray and meditate daily. They are expected to live a moral life in service of mankind and in humility and honesty. They vow:

Not to use tobacco or other intoxicants
Never to cut hair from any part of their body
To avoid eating any meat from animals that were killed in a religious or sacrificial manner
To never have any sexual contact outside of marriage
To wear the five symbols of Sikhs – unshorn hair, a comb, a steel bracelet, a short sword, and a type of short pants usually worn under the outer clothes, and men must wear turbans.

Sikhists do not have any kind of priestly order, monks, or nuns. The clergyman is the *granthi*, and he is allowed to be married. The five temporal seats of Sikh religious authority in India are headed by the *Akal Takhat*. They debate matters that are of concern to the worldwide community of Sikh's. A passage of the *Guru Granth Sahib* is read aloud at a formal Sikh service and most of the time is spent singing passages that are accompanied by music. Then the *granthi* expounds upon the passage that was recited to conclude the service. In the absence of the *granthi*, a Sikh with sufficient knowledge can conduct *gurdwara* worship. Sikhs are open to anyone who wishes to attend their religious services and the *langar* served afterwards.

Sikhs are to pray before each meal that a needy person will come to share in the food. There is an attitude of active participation by each person to achieve social justice and ensuring that the poor of the world and in the local community, are fed, clothed, and sheltered.

Historical dates

CE 1469-1530	Life of Nanak, first Sikh Guru	1757-69	Repeated invasions of the Punjab in a "holy war" against Sikhs by Ahmad Shah Abdali of Afghanistan
1504-52.1	Life of Angad, second Sikh Guru		
1479-1574	Life of Amar Das, third Sikh Guru		
1534-81.1	Life of Ram Das, fourth Sikh Guru	1947	Partition of Pakistan and India
1563-1606	Life of Arjan, fifth Sikh Guru	1984	Golden Temple in Amritsar stormed by Indian Army. Mrs Indira Gandhi assassinated: two of her Sikh bodyguards are accused by the police. Many Hindus riot against Sikhs in India.
1595-1644	Life of Har Gobind, sixth Sikh Guru		
1630-61.1	Life of Har Rai, seventh Sikh Guru		
1656-64.1	Life of Har Krishan, eighth Sikh Guru		
1621-75	Life of Teg Bhadur, ninth Sikh Guru		
1666-1708	Life of Gobind Rai, tenth Sikh Guru		

Key Terms

Akhand Path An uninterrupted complete reading of the Sikh scriptures, taking about forty-eight hours.

Amritsar The location of the Golden Temple. A sacred site for Sikhs, it has four doors facing each cardinal direction, to indicate that all are welcome.

Amrit The ceremony where a Sikh dedicates his or her life to Sikhism.

Ardas A formal prayer recited at the close of Sikh services.

Demi – gods A person who is considered partly divine significant holy or half – god. **Gurdwara** This literally means the "Guru's door." The Sikh scriptures are kept here it is a place of hospitality and worship.

Five K's The five signs to show that you are a **committed** Sikh. They are Kesh (uncut hair), Kangha (comb), Kach (short drawers), Kara (steel bracelet), and Kirpan (sword).

Japji a Sikh hymn to be recited every morning in devotions.

Khalsa The Sikh symbol comprised of two daggers and a sword.

Kirtan This is the praising of God. Consisting of the singing of hymns from the scriptures.

Polytheistic A belief in many gods. Sikhism is very much opposed to this idea.

Punjab The region of northern India and Pakistan that is the location of the most Sites.

Sidharan Path A normal reading of the Adi Granth Takht The "throne," a place of authority **for secular** reflection.

Akal Takht, in Amritsar, has the preeminent status.

Major Festivals

Sikh months

Chaitra	March – April	Asvina	September – October
Vaisakha	April – May	Kartikka	October – November
Jyaistha	May – June	Margasirsa	November – December
Asadha	June – July	Pausa	December – January
Dvitya Asadha (certain leap years)		Magha	January – February
Sravana	July – August	Phalguna	February – March
Dvitya Sravana (certain leap years)			
Bhadrapada	August – September		

(Sikh months are the same as Hindu months. Each month, apart from the two, which occur only on certain leap years, has 29 or 30 solar days.)

Divali (a festival of deliverance) Asvina K 15
Guru Nanak's birthday Kartikka S 15
Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bhadur Magha S 5
Guru Gobind Singh's birthday Pausa S 7
Baisakhi (The Founding of the Order of the Khalsa)
Vaisakha K 15
Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Jyaistha S 4
(S: waxing fortnight; K: waning fortnight)

Wicca and Nature Spirituality

Wicca does not have a single leader or prophet; there is no Wiccan bible or literature that tells the absolute truth about beliefs and it is a non-dogmatic religion. Each individual is able to experience the Divine personally through the mastery of a dynamic and accessible system of techniques. People who practice Wicca consider themselves priests and priestesses. Their practice involves passages of life and initiatory rituals. They are respected as Elders and teachers in these rituals.

Wicca is a vital spiritual path that revives the ancient pre-Christian indigenous religion of Europe. It is both old and new in its mix of tradition and vibrant creativity with a life affirming Earth based religion. It includes using modern liturgy, ritual and shamanism to attune one to Earth's natural rhythms, which is how they experience a communion with the embodied Divine. In the *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000), edited by Joel Beversluis, an article by H.Ps. Phyllis W. Currott, J.D. called *Wicca: A Portrait*, explains how the Divine is perceived in Wicca: "Wiccans experience the Divine as immanent, as embodied in the Universe, the world in all its aspects and in humanity, as well as transcendent. Therefore all of life is perceived as sacred and interconnected." Wiccans also believe nature to be a great teacher; they devote themselves to finding the spiritual wisdom that can be seen in the Earth's transformation in the cycle of the seasons and integrate that wisdom into their lives.

Early "witches" were persecuted by the Church in the middle ages and the famous Salem witch trials of 1692. Accused of having made a compact with the devil, girls and women of this New England town were tried as evil witches. Many were convicted and hung. Also known as the Old Religion, Witchcraft, or the Craft, the word 'Wicca' is taken from "wicce," an old Anglo-saxon word that is pronounced "witche," which gave rise to the frequently misunderstood term Witchcraft. Reflecting the influence of the Old Norse word "vitke," meaning a seer, priestess or shaman, "wicce" means a practitioner of the Old Religion. The Latin word "paganus" means a country dweller and is the derivative of "pagan." Another related term that has been misinterpreted as a pejorative is "heathen," one who dwelt on the heath, or earth. As with Native Americans and other indigenous groups, these were European people who lived close to the Earth and had a sacred relationship with nature.

Along with Taoists and other indigenous Earth religions, Wicca is a religion that believes spiritual insight can be achieved through living in harmony with the Earth. Wiccan practices are meant to attune humanity to the cycles of nature. The phases of the moon and seasonal changes all have rituals aligned with them. Wiccans seek to practice their spirituality in daily life the same way they do in their sacred rituals. In following this practice they experience the Divine in gardening, making love, giving birth, preparing a meal, and growing old as well as in praying, shamanic work, meditation and rituals.

An important part of Wiccan worship is the Goddess. She is seen as transcendent and immanent. Wicca acknowledges masculine *and* feminine energy as the Divine. However, the Goddess is an essential aspect and can be worshipped as a nameless single Goddess, or as the many names and aspects that she has been known and personified as, including: the Triple Goddess, the Great Mother, Demeter, Gaia, Brigid, Cerridwen, Oestara, Innana, Shekinah, Amateratsu, and many others. The growing popularity of Wicca among women is primarily because of the way it honors the Divine in its feminine aspect, genuinely respecting women as spiritual leaders, wise women and healers.

Honoring each individual's freedom to ascertain truth, live their best life, and experience the Divine directly, this religion has one fundamental ethical precept: "An (if) it harm none, do what you will." And as in many religions, Wiccans decide with different conclusions how these fundamental precepts apply to issues like abortion, vegetarianism, or participation in war.

"Magic" is a word that is used in Wicca. It refers to the spiritual practices which are really techniques for changing consciousness at will so that one can better participate in Divine reality. To live a full and spiritual life

by transforming the self so that one can develop gifts and capacities is a primary purpose of Wiccan techniques. Wicca is also practiced for purposes such as healing, purification, blessing, divination, and to help achieve life goals by raising one's energy to fulfill things like careers and relationships.

A form of meditation and ritual that is frequently misunderstood is the "casting of a spell." It is not used as a means of having power over others, or nature, by invoking supernatural forces. It is actually very similar to prayer in other religions, but it is different in the way that it does not beseech the help or intervention of an outside God or Deity. Rather it draws out the indwelling Divine energy into the world by harmoniously interacting with the already present Divine. In Wiccan cosmology, trying to have control and dominion over nature or others is an alien idea. The goal is not to have power over anything, nor to work with supernatural powers to do so. This would be considered unethical. Even when doing work such as healing on behalf of another, which is an important part of Wicca, this is always done with the other person's knowledge and consent.

Some traditions and denominations within the Old Religion often reflect the practices of certain ethnic groups such as Celtic, Norse, Welsh, Finno, Ugric, Greek, Italian, Lithuanian, etc. Some practice with the guidance and teaching of their Wiccan contemporaries who have published liturgical works. Some practitioners choose to work creatively within a group that has a mutually agreed upon structure, or look within themselves for direction and inspiration. Many traditions include both men and women; some are only practiced by women, and others only by men. There are many traditions that are hundreds of years old and others that have only been in existence for a few years. Wicca is a living, growing religious tradition that has strength, whether drawing forth the highest spontaneous and creative expression of an individual or carrying on an ancient lineage's spiritual vocabulary, because of its vitality and diversity.

Other forms of nature religions are found in the native peoples of the Americas, Asia, Africa, Polynesia, Europe, Australia and elsewhere. Religions of ancient pagan cultures, such as Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Assyrian, Teutonic, Celtic, Minoan, and others are found among contemporary Pagans. Nature spirituality honors the interconnected spirituality of life throughout the Universe/Cosmos, as well as on the planet Earth. Nature spirituality is different from nature religion, it includes Celestial religions; used synonymously by some with contemporary Paganism so it is a more encompassing term than Earth-Centered Spirituality. It can also include interfaith blends, like those that practice Paganism with Eco-Buddhism or Eco-Christianity. Pagan pertains to a practitioner of either a contemporary or ancient religion, or to a nature religion. Nature Spirituality, a group or practitioner of Goddess Spirituality, and/or Earth-Centered Spirituality, are both referred to as Pagan. (Witchcraft in particular will be covered more extensively in the UMS course called *Witchcraft*.)

Historical Dates

1275	First person to be accused of witchcraft and burned at the stake, Angela, Lady of Labarthe
15 th century	Campaign to eradicate Pagans by the Christians, the Inquisitions
1692	Salem Witch Trials
20 th century	Emergence of Neo-Paganism
1954	Gerald Brousseau Gardner writes <i>Witchcraft Today</i> , the first book from a witch's perspective

Major Festivals

The Sabbats

Imbolc	February Eve
Beltane	May Eve
Lughnasadh	August Eve
Samhain	November Eve
Spring Equinox	March 21 st
Summer Solstice	June 21 st
Autumnal Equinox	September 21 st
Winter Solstice	December 21 st

Key Terms

Absent Healing A form of healing in which the patient does not need to be present. It can be performed by a coven in a healing circle or by a Solitary Witch, and always with the ill person's permission.

Altar Usually regarded as the most sacred part of a temple, it is a piece of furniture used at a religious ceremony. It holds the various sacred items used in the rites.

Animism From the Latin *anima*, meaning “soul” or “breath,” animism is the doctrine of spiritual beings—the concept that everything in nature, animate and inanimate, has consciousness.

Athame The one personal tool used by every Witch. A knife with a straight, double-edged blade, and usually has a black handle. Used only in ritual to cast a Circle, cut through a Circle to enter or leave, and for invocations and evocations.

“Blessed Be” A traditional greeting of Witches, the long form is used in initiation ceremonies and is as follows ‘Blessed be thy feet, that have brought thee in these ways/ Blessed be thy knees, that shall kneel at the Sacred Altar/ Blessed by thy womb/genitals, the fount of life, without which we would not be/ Blessed be thy breasts, erected in beauty and in strength/ Blessed be thy lips, which shall utter the sacred names.’ Saying “Blessed Be” implies the full blessing.

Coven A group of Witches that meet regularly to practice their religion.

Inquisition Started by the Catholic Church, a persecution of heretics and enemies of the church, by investigation and torture.

Occult From the Latin word *occulere*, it means “to conceal.” Something that is hidden, secret, or esoteric.

Priest/Priestess In Wicca all Witches are considered to be priests and priestesses, they are considered to be a plenipotentiary between humans and the gods. From “Presbyter,” the leader of a Witchcraft coven.

Rite; Ritual The form of a religious or magical ceremony, usually following a traditional structure, it comes from the Latin root related to ‘number’ or ‘counting,’ the way things are to be done—one after another. It is made up of “things said” (*legomena*) and “things done” (*dromena*).

Sabbat From the Old French *s’ebattre*, “to revel or frolic,” it is applied to the main festivals of Witchcraft. There are eight of these festivals, spread equally throughout the year.

Voodoo A religion, like Witchcraft, that does not involve black magic, or sticking of pins into dolls. It is a religion of initiation, a mystery religion, it stems from the Ivory Coast of Africa. It is also called *Voudoun* and is the word for “spirit” or “god,” or a sacred object.

Judaism

There are around thirteen million Jews in the world. The biggest demographic concentration is in North America, followed by Israel, Europe, Latin America, and then Africa, with other smaller communities spread throughout the world. Jews have had a great influence on the world’s history, more so than any other comparable group of people. Some of the great thinkers in history were Jewish: Moses, Jesus, Marx, Freud, as well as Einstein. The religious outlook of Judaism gave birth to Christianity and Islam. The Jewish people founded the idea of monotheism—God is one. In *Essential Judaism* (2000), George Robinson says their idea of God evolved into something quite different than any previous idea of a Supreme Being, “...the idea of a single, omnipotent, omniscient God is a Jewish invention, one that has changed the course of Western (and, therefore, world) history.”

It is hard to find any analogies or parallels in religious history for this difficult to define religion that is Judaism. Hans-Joachim Schoeps’ book *The Religions of Mankind: Their Origins and Development* (1966), talks about this: “The term Judaism does not express either a religion only, or a race, or a modern nation.” The patriarchal roots of the Jewish tree of life are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The seed that started this was a call bidding Abraham to leave his homeland of Mesopotamia and find the Promised Land, which was known then as Canaan, to found a people. They would forever be locked in a special relationship with the creator of heaven and earth, whose desire for mercy and justice they would try to fulfill. Essentially this is the covenant that set apart and unified the semi-nomadic tribes of 3,700 years ago. They would call themselves the children of Israel. This covenant was renewed and expanded several centuries later during the exodus from Egypt on a desert mountain called Sinai when Israel received its Torah. When this took place it gave the Jews both their reason and power for survival as a people.

In *Great Religions of the World* (1978), from National Geographic Books, Rabbi Herbert Weiner explains the many meanings of the Torah: “It can mean the parchment scroll kept in the synagogue Ark; or the five books of Moses (the Pentateuch) inscribed on this scroll, the ‘written’ Torah which Orthodox Jews believe is the literal word of God. It can include the Talmud, the ‘oral’ tradition which Orthodoxy also traces back to Sinai—legends, laws, and customs that explain the written Torah. In its broadest sense, Torah is every word or act which reveals the power and presence of God, from the preaching of the prophets to the simple statement of an anonymous cowherd: ‘Lord of the universe! It is known to you that if you had cattle and gave them to me to tend, though I take wages from all others, from you I would take nothing because I love you.’”

The other basic texts of Judaism are the Talmud, particular books of the Bible, and the prayer book. There are also many more texts such as commentaries on the law, sayings of inspired teachers, and mystical and philosophical writings such as the Kabbalah.

In the beginning of Judaism, even when the priests were still offering Biblically ordained sacrifices in Herod's golden Temple, the rabbis had begun to form their religion into a faith that was not dependent or solely connected to one place or even one land. Though he made special demands upon his chosen people, this biblical God was universal. Jews in the time of the second Temple who lived in Babylon did not have easy access to Jerusalem, so they substituted small sanctuaries. The rabbis taught that wherever ten men gather in God's name He will cause His Presence to descend.

Still, they do not take light the Psalmist's oath, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." They declared that when a Jew prays, he must face toward the holy city. They also have a saying that when the Holy of Holies went up in flames, a spark of this flame descended into the synagogue, a place which men can be sanctified by their prayers. The rabbis also fixed the basic forms of liturgy. They were never to seal the prayer book that had emerged, it would be allowed to grow with the inspiration of spiritual genius. Rabbi Herbert Weiner speaks about how this works so well in Judaism, "...a fixed liturgy meant that a Jew in 6th Century Babylon, in 14th Century Cordova, and in 20th Century Poland were united by words, thoughts, and moods which could annul the disintegrating effects of time and space."

An important part of practicing Judaism is studying the law and using it as a guide to life and this in itself can be life's peak experience, which the rabbis showed by example and spelling out every detail of the law. Their contributions gave a solid support to the Jews, who would have a portable homeland whose pillars were 'Torah, prayer, and good works for their long trial of exile that followed a Roman conquest of Judaea 19 centuries earlier.

The Jewish belief that there is one God who made everything, took the Israelites out of their bondage in Egypt and revealed his divine teachings or *Torah* to them, and brought them into the Holy Land is at the center of this religion. These redemptive acts by God have colored the way that Jews view this situation since the biblical period and the hope that the Messiah, or anointed one of God, will one day come and usher in the messianic age and then they will be gathered once again to the Land of Israel.

The Pentateuchal teachings were revealed to Moses and the Israelites while they were wandering through the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt around the 14th Century B.C.E. This is the reason they believe Israel to be the chosen people by God. This text is not identical to the Torah or even the whole Hebrew Bible, which is also a divinely inspired text, but goes further in including the oral teachings of Judaism, which are thought to go back to the time of the revelation to Moses.

Something that has come to be accepted as an official creed of Judaism, despite criticism by subsequent scholars, is Maimonides' analysis of the thirteen fundamentals of Jewish belief. In its structure, it deals with the first five fundamental beliefs concerning God: God is the creator of all that is; God is one; God is incorporeal; God is eternal; and God alone is to be worshipped. Then it covers the four fundamental beliefs on revelation. They are: that God communicates to man through the medium of prophecy; that Moses was the greatest of the prophets to whom God communicated in the most direct manner; that the whole of the Torah (i.e. Pentateuch) was revealed to Moses by God; and that the Torah will not be changed or supplanted by another revelation from God. The tenth and eleventh fundamental beliefs are in God's knowledge of the deeds of mankind and his concern about them, that he rewards and punishes people for their good or evil ways. The idea is that a Jew is free to choose how he acts and is responsible for the consequences of his choices. This has been a point of contention. In *A Handbook of Living Religions* (1984), Alan Unterman comments, "Although some radical theologians have questioned these basic assumptions about God, particularly in the light of the killing of millions of Jews by the Nazis, which seems to make a mockery of the idea of a just world and caring God, they have remained part and parcel of mainstream Jewish thought in the modern world."

The last two of Maimonides' fundamentals are about the coming of the Messiah, a descendant of the line of David, the famed ancient king of Israel, as mentioned above, and among the things he will also do, such as resurrect the dead. Alan Unterman also talks about how these are controversial as well: "Both of these doctrines are considered questionable by sections of [Jews] since the beginning of Jewish emancipation in the late eighteenth century." This idea of a personal Messiah of the Davidic line was thought to be too particular and people in the Reform movement prefer to talk more about the universalistic messianic age that will dawn for all mankind.

Rabbi Herbert Bronstein is Senior Rabbi at North Shore Congregation Israel in Illinois, and wrote a piece on Judaism for the *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000). He describes the essence of how the Covenant can be used for the betterment of all, "The goal of this Covenant consciousness in alliance with the Divine is clearly put in the ancient text as... A good life for all, through adherence to God's Teaching (*Torah*) and Commandments (*Mitzvot*), harmony on earth on the individual and social levels culminating in peace and well-being for all humanity. Thus Judaism is characterized as a religion of deed, a 'Way' by which human beings are capable of understanding and responding to God's teaching."

The basic symbol of Judaism is a seven-branched candelabrum meant to be the embodiment of the cosmic images of all Time and Space. It is also a symbol of Redemption, the goal of human existence. It can be reduced to simply, Light. Light is a very prominent tradition that is expressed in Jewish observance when lighting the Sabbath and Festival lights in the home and the braided candle at the end of Sabbath, the kindling of lights in the eight-day mid-winter Festival of Lights (*Chanukah*), commemorating the rededication of the holy Temple from pollution and therefore of the sacred from profanity; the memorial lights to remember the dead; and the Eternal Light over the Ark in the synagogue which contains the *Scroll of the Torah*.

The synagogue is the Jewish place of worship, from a Greek word meaning 'place of assembly.' Reform Jews do not believe that the Temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt in the days of the Messiah like the Orthodox do, so sometimes their synagogues are called 'temples'. There are no equivalent words in Hebrew, but there are some phrases used to describe the institution in its various forms, *Bet Midrash/House of Study*, *Bet Tefillah/House of Prayer*, and *Bet Knesset/House of Assembly*. The Yiddish word *shul* is often used as well. The synagogue building often has at least one sanctuary where services are held, and usually houses offices, classrooms, auditoriums, social halls, and even recreational facilities. The basic setup is like the structure of the First Temple (586 B.C.E.) with the *Aron Kodesh/Holy Ark* at the front of the space, which contains the *Sifrei Torah/Torah scrolls*. The *Ner Tamid/Eternal Light* hangs above it, representing the eternal light of Torah. The *bimah* corresponds to the pulpit used by the priests to preside over sacrifices. Jewish worship became a democratic and individual event after the shift from sacrifices to praying. In an Orthodox synagogue there is separate seating for men and women with a partition like a curtain, screen, or wall called a *mekhitzah* set up between them. The *bimah* is in the center of the sanctuary and is usually surrounded by the congregants. In most Ashkenazi *shuls* everyone faces the same way. In Sephardic congregations three sides face the *bimah* but not away from the Ark. Gender-segregated seating has been abolished in other denominations. The *bimah* is generally at the front of the sanctuary raised above the seating floor in front of the Ark in Reform synagogues.

Judaism is nonhierarchical in worship and the distinction between lay leadership and the rabbinate is much narrower in theory and practice compared to most Christian denominations. The only difference between a layperson and a rabbi is that a rabbi can sign a marriage license, which is a power granted by the state and not a Jewish body. A Jew who knows a sufficient amount can even conduct a funeral or a *kiddushin/sanctification* ceremony for a wedding, although it is much preferred that a rabbi perform the latter. Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionists all ordain women as rabbis and cantors, in fact more than half of the students entering the rabbinical seminaries in the United States are women. Reconstructionist Rabbinical College has been ordaining women since its opening in 1967. The Hebrew Union College first ordained women in 1975 and the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York admitted its first female students to both its rabbinical and cantorial programs in 1983.

There are two kinds of practices in Judaism, ceremonial and ethical. The ceremonies are colorful rituals carried out both in the home and the synagogue. The Sabbath and festivals are celebrated with much joy, always beginning at nightfall and ending at nightfall. For Sabbath, two candles are lit as a symbol of peace in the home and increased spiritual light within. One person recites a benediction over a cup in which they praise God for creating this earth and giving the rest that is the Sabbath. Table hymns are sung by the whole family during the meal. The purpose and meaning of the Sabbath is to abstain from work to attain a greater spiritual state. In *Judaism* (1962), edited by Arthur Hertzberg, Exodus 20:8-11 explains the tradition of the Sabbath: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son, or your daughter, your manservant or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." Many such quotes about the Sabbath are in the Jewish Scriptures. There are thirty-nine categories of

work that are forbidden on the Sabbath. The rabbis in the time of the Second Temple began to codify Jewish law (*halakhah*) and specified these prohibited activities. The five main areas of work that are not allowed are agricultural work, working with clothing or fabric, working with leather or parchment; writing, construction, working with fire. This set of laws also has subcategories covering the details of the work that is forbidden.

In the Orthodox tradition, Jews follow the laws that prohibit any kind of creative activity on the Sabbath. Some even refrain from switching on electric lights, and they do not ride, write, engage in business, smoke, or carry anything in the street on the Sabbath. This is all in acknowledgement of God as Creator and giver of life's blessings. Reform Judaism is more lax in most of these laws while still holding onto the ideal of the Sabbath as a day devoted to spiritual pursuits. In the Sabbath service at the synagogue, a scroll of the Pentateuch is taken from the Ark at the eastern end of the building and is carried in a procession around the standing congregation. It is always written by hand and there are detailed rules that the scribe has to go by while carrying out this sacred task. The scroll is adorned with silver ornaments, especially tinkling bells. A portion is read each week by a different member of the congregation, within the year the whole Pentateuch will have been read, concluded and then begun again in Autumn. It is an honor to read the end and start the beginning, and these people are called respectively: 'Bridegroom of the Torah' and 'Bridegroom of Genesis.' The congregation enjoys festivities to mark the event.

From *Man, Myth & Magic* (1985), editor in chief Richard Cavendish, we learn of some more festivals: "The three pilgrim festivals (so called because in Temple times people would ascend to Jerusalem, then in joyous pilgrimage to the Temple) are the Passover in the spring, Pentecost seven weeks later, and Tabernacles in the autumn. Passover is in celebration of the Exodus from Egypt, when God led the enslaved people out of Egyptian bondage; in their haste to depart they had not time to bake their bread properly, so that they were obliged to eat unleavened bread... Pentecost is a celebration of the giving of the Torah, that is, of the revelation on Mt. Sinai, as told in the book of Exodus... Tabernacles celebrates the dwelling of the Israelites in 'booths' in the wilderness after they had gone out of Egypt."

Passover is an eight day festival, on the first night, a ceremony is performed at home where the family eats unleavened cakes and bitter herbs to remind them of the bitterness of slavery. They drink wine in joy for their new-found freedom. They recite the *Haggadah* (literally 'the telling'), which is a dramatic presentation of the Exodus. It begins with the youngest child that is present asking four questions about the unusual ceremonies that he is witnessing, and his father and everyone else reply. Sometimes, pious Jews do not eat any leavened bread during the eight days of the festival. Celebrating the giving of the Torah, the revelation on Mt. Sinai as told in the book of Exodus, is Pentecost. At the synagogue service, the portion of Exodus that tells of these events is read from the Scrolls. Then the Ten Commandments are read.

Tabernacles is a celebration of the Israelites who dwelt in 'booths' in the wilderness after they had left Egypt. Some Jews build a booth in their gardens, leaving the roof open to the sky lightly covered with foliage, they eat all their meals in it for the seven days of the festival. In thanksgiving for God's bounty they take a palm branch and other plants in hand during the recitation of Psalms in the synagogue.

The New Year festival is a solemn occasion. The majority of the day is spent in prayer. On the eve of the festival an apple is dipped in honey and eaten at the festive meal while a prayer to God for a sweet and good year is recited. At the synagogue service, the central feature is the blowing of the ram's horn. It is the oldest musical instrument known to man. The main idea of the meaning of this ceremony is that the loud sound of the horn gives a shrill warning to man to awaken himself to his responsibilities in the coming year. Another purpose is that trumpets are blown at the coronation of a king, and at the beginning of the New Year, God is hailed as king of the universe. Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, is the great fast on the tenth day after the New Year. Very devout Jews will fast for 24 hours without even drinking and spend most of the day in prayer. This is a day of pardon and Jews confess their sins and throw themselves on the divine mercy. Even though this day is solemn it ends on a joyous note because they have reconciled with God. Some non-Jews have called this day 'Black Fast', but this is a misnomer. Actually, the readers of the services and many members of the congregation dress in long white robes that symbolize purity and divine compassion.

Purim (literally 'lots') is a minor feast. It is the celebration of the Jews' deliverance from the machinations of Haman. This is recounted in *Essential Judaism* (2000) by George Robinson, "...many cultures have a spring holiday that calls for a bacchanalian release of pent-up energy, a welcome explosion of hilarity after the long winter. At the heart of Purim is the story of Esther, a beautiful and smart Jewish woman who, with the help of her uncle Mordecai, averts the destruction of the Jews by marrying King Ahashverus of Persia and thwarting the evil designs of Haman,

one of the royal councilors and a rabid anti-Semite. In the end, Haman, his ten sons, and thousands of his followers are executed, and Esther and Ahashverus live happily ever after, with Mordecai as a chief advisor and the Jews once more safely at peace." This is a lively celebration with excessive drinking, dressing up and riotous behavior. It's meaning 'lots' is derived from Haman's casting of lots, which is a form of divination, to determine the day that he will massacre the Jews. They celebrate his failure with great joy and merriment.

Hanukah (dedication) was only a minor festival until the advent of *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment of the nineteenth century when non-Jews began accepting Jews more widely. After World War II they were living in relative peace with their American and European Christian neighbors. As explained by George Robinson in *Essential Judaism* (2000) this mid-Winter holiday, "...became a sort of Jewish counterpart to Christmas, if only as a marketing ploy, and took on new importance. In Israel the holiday has taken on an added symbolism, becoming a celebration of Jewish military prowess and national rebirth. That development is ironic, to say the least. Hanukah is a celebration of the Maccabees, Jewish warriors who fought a lengthy civil war in defiance of Hellenization, the first great assimilationist trend in Jewish history. Between 163 and 165 the Maccabees struggle to recapture Jerusalem and to reclaim the Temple for the Jewish people... the Maccabees, led by Judah Maccabee, would continue to fight for many more years, until they drove the Syrians from ancient Israel and reasserted Jewish sovereignty."

During this occupation of Jerusalem by the Syrians, the Temple was defiled by pagan sacrifices on orders from the Syrian ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes. He wanted to Hellenize all of Palestine and eliminate the practice of the Jewish religion. When the Maccabees retook Jerusalem, they took down all the defiled ritual objects and destroyed the now polluted altar and built a new one. They found a small amount of consecrated oil that was used in the sacred lamps, but it was not enough for the eight days of the celebration and rededication. So the priests lit the oil for the first day's worship and miraculously, the next day there was still enough oil for the services. The oil ended up lasting for the whole eight days of worship. This miracle is observed with the lighting of the festival candles over the eight days of Hanukah. It is curious that the Maccabees celebrated this "holiday of lights" at the darkest time of the calendar year and it is believed that the guerrilla fighters hadn't been able to observe Sukkot during their two years undercover and had celebrated on their return to Jerusalem a belated Sukkot. It is Judaism's first post-biblical holiday, and is not found in the Tanakh.

In Judaism, blessings exist for almost any experience one could have in a normal day. Blessings for things like eating bread, drinking wine or grape juice, eating fruit grown on a tree, produce grown in the earth, and any other foods. There are also blessings when one sees lightning, the ocean, beautiful things such as people, trees, or fields, and upon hearing good or bad news. The rabbis believed that a Jew should offer at least one hundred b'rakhot every day. An example of such a blessing is taken here from *Essential Judaism* (2000) by George Robinson, "Before eating products of wheat, barley, rye, oats, or spelt: Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu Melkh ha'olam borei minei mizonot/Blessed are You Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates many types of Nourishment."

According to tradition, if a child is born from a Jewish mother, then he or she is considered a Jew. It does not matter if the father is Jewish. If only the father is Jewish, then the child is not considered a Jew. Every male child is circumcised on the eighth day after birth and is then given a Hebrew name. Circumcision represents the entrance of the child into the covenant which God made with Abraham and his descendants. This ceremony includes a celebratory meal. Until girls turn twelve and boys turn thirteen they are considered minors. They are gradually instructed in the Jewish rituals, taught Hebrew and learn to translate some passages from the Bible and the prayer book. When they reach twelve and thirteen, respectively, they are seen as adults and are expected to keep the halakhic rules in their entirety. This passage to maturity is marked by a Bar Mitzvah ceremony for a boy, and a Bat Mitzvah ceremony for a girl. The Bat Mitzvah is a relatively new thing and was introduced in modern times to give girls more of a role in Jewish public life. It is more common in Reform communities than in Orthodox ones, and several girls participate in the ceremony together. A Bar Mitzvah begins with the boy being called up in synagogue to read from the *Torah* scroll or the weekly portion from the *Prophets*. An elaborate party with the boy's family and friends follows.

A high point in the life of a Jew is marriage. It signifies setting up a new family, and family is the basic unit of Jewish ritual. "For an orthodox family, the whole of life is dominated by the religious element," as Hans-Joachim Schoeps writes in *The Religions of Mankind: Their Origin and Development* (1966).

The daily services for an observant Jew are held three times a day consisting of prayer, singing, reading, and different blessings. Whenever Jews pray they face the ark where the Torah is kept.

Rabbi Herbert Bronstein writes of the different types of Judaism in the *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000), "Jews are not divided into creedal denominations, strictly speaking, in the same manner as Christianity. There are 'streams' of Jewish religious life which express varying responses to the encounter of Jews with the modern world." The four areas that Judaism is split up into are Reform or Liberal, which is generally the most liberal and has adapted more of a Western style of worship. Reform has modified the forms of observance passed down by tradition and leans toward the vernacular in worship. Orthodox Judaism as Rabbi Bronstein describes it, "...conceives of the entire corpus of Jewish observance, the received tradition, as equivalent to having been given by God at Sinai and therefore unchangeable except through procedures which were themselves given at Sinai." Conservative Judaism is a way in between these two positions. Reconstructionism is a more recent emergence in modern Jewish life, it sees Jewish religious forms and observances as part of a historic Jewish "civilization," or culture. They value this culture, its preservation is like a naturalist theology. Reconstructionism is opening up to neo-mystical themes and observances as well. Of course, there are many more varieties and degrees of Jewish religious life beyond what has been described here, but these are the basic groups. Some Jews have no religious belief whatsoever, but the majority of Jews in the world do subscribe to the faith of Judaism. In *Man, Myth & Magic: volume 6* (1985), described are the types of people who's *ethnicity* is Jewish: "One large division [of Jews] (an ethnic rather than a doctrinal one) is between Oriental Jews together with those hailing from Spain and Portugal, and Jews from other parts of Europe. The former are known as Sefardim (from the Hebrew name for Spain, *Sefarad*) and the latter as Ashkenazim (from the Hebrew name for Germany, *Ashkenaz*). The differences between these two groupings are in minor liturgical rites, customs and popular foods.

Key Terms

Antisemitism Discrimination against Semites (Jews).

Ark The box kept in the Temple. The Israelites stored the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments in it.

Bar Mitzvah Translated as "Son of the Commandment," it is a traditional synagogue initiation for boys turning 13.

Bat Mitzvah It means "Daughter of the Commandments." It is the initiation ceremony for girls turning 13.

Benedictions Meaning "blessing," they are formal blessings or thanksgivings used frequently in Jewish services.

Conservatives A Jewish group, which maintains that Judaism, may be reinterpreted to a limited degree for the present situation.

Covenant An agreement. In the Hebrew Bible, God's covenants carried either individual or communal responsibility.

Hebrew Bible The Jewish holy scriptures of 24 books, divided into three sections: Torah, Prophets, and Hagiographa ("writings").

Holocaust Term used to refer to the mass murder of Jewish people under Adolf Hitler during World War II.

Idolatry Worshipping or identifying an image or object as God.

Kosher A term which refers to things which are clean or permitted. In Judaism, the word is used for food which conforms to the dietary laws.

Maccabeans A group of Jews that led a successful revolt against Antiochus IV Epiphanes, in the second

century C.E, He planned to transform Jerusalem into a completely Greek city to destroy Judaism.

Mezuzah Jews affix this small parchment scroll, that contains verses from the Shema, to the entrance doorposts of their buildings and homes.

Minyan A group of ten Jewish men, which is the minimum number for communal worship.

Mitzvot Literally, "commandment." Traditionally there are 613 commandments in the Torah and this is used to refer to the requirements of the Jewish law.

Mohel A qualified specialist who carries out the ritual circumcision on Jewish male babies.

Heathen A polytheist; a believer in more than one god..

Pentateuch The first five books of the Hebrew Bible, also called the Torah, or the five books of Moses.

Zionism Political movement dedicated to the aim of returning the Jewish people to the land of Israel.

Historical Dates

c. 1850-1700 B.C.E.	Abraham & Sarah, Isaac & Ishmael; origin of traditions of the “Abrahamic covenant,” traditions of Jacob/Israel and the Twelve Patriarchs
1300-1200 B.C.E.	Mosaic period (Israel); Exodus from Egypt; Torah given at Sinai, entry into Canaan (c.1250– 1200)
c. 1013-973 B.C.E.	Life of King David
722 B.C.E.	Fall of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) to Assyria
586 B.C.E.	Fall of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) to Babylon
168 B.C.E.	Maccabean Revolt
63 B.C.E.	Romans conquer Jerusalem
C.E. 70	Destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans
C.E. 220	Completion of Mishnah
C.E. 480	Completion of Babylonian Talmud
C.E. 1041-1105	Life of Rashi
c. C.E. 1135-1204	Life of Maimonides
C.E. 1897	The founding of the Zionist Movement
C.E. 1933-45	The Holocaust
C.E. 1948	The establishment of the State of Israel. The first gay and lesbian synagogue founded
1980	The World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations founded

The Jewish calendar months:

Tishri	September – October	Nisan	March -- April
Heshvan	October – November	Iyar	April – May
Kislev	November – December	Sivan	May – June
Tevet	December – January	Tammuz	June – July
Shevet	January – February	Av	July – August
Adar	February – March	Elul	August – September

Major Festivals:

Rosh Hashanah (New Year)	1 – 2 Tishri	Fast of Esther	13 Adar
Fast of Gedaliah	3 Tishri	Purim (Feast of Lots)	14 – 15 Adar
Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)	10 Tishri	Pesakh (Passover)	15 – 22 Nisan
Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles)	5 – 21 Tishri	Yom ha-Shoah	27 Nisan
Shemini Atzeret	22 Tishri	Yom ha-Atzma'ut	5 Iyar
Simkut Torah (Rejoicing of the Law)	23 Tishra	Lag b'Omer	18 Iyar
Hannukah (Feast of Dedication)	25 Kislet – 2-3 Tevet	Yom Yerushalayim	28 Iyar
Fast of 10 Tevet	10 Tevet	Shavout (first day)	6 Sivan
Tu bi-Shevat	15 Shevat	Fast of 17 Tammuz	17 Tammuz
		Tisha b'Av	9 Av

Islam

Over one billion people are active Muslims throughout the continents of the world. This religion was revealed to mankind by Allah, the Alone God, through the many human messengers-prophets in history. They believe the final revelation was given to the Prophet Muhammad who lived from 570-632 C.E. Attached to his name is a blessing that is often used after the names of honored prophets—*Salla-Allahu alayhi wa Sallam*/may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him. It is sometimes abbreviated in print to SAAWS or SA. Derived from the root letters *s.l.m.* (Ar. *Sin, Lam, Mim*), Islam means “to be in peace,” “to be secure,” and “to be integral, whole.” Muslims feel at peace because they have consciously submitted their will to the Almighty Alone God and are at peace with themselves, all creatures, and God.

A Muslim is someone who has surrendered their whole being to God and committed themselves to pattern their life on his divine guidance that he communicated to the human messenger-prophets. Islam is embodied in the Qur'an and in the *Sunnah*, which are the actions, sayings, and approvals of the Prophet

Muhammad. In the Qur'an, Islam is described as the primordial or natural religion of the innate nature with which Allah created mankind (Qur'an 30:30), and as the religion which was completed and consummated in the Qur'an, the final definitive Divine Writ from Allah. He created Adam, the first human being, and made him and his offspring inheritors of the earth. He endowed them with the requisite faculties to be His trustees on earth. Muslims believe that Allah revealed His message and guidance to many people at different times and places, starting with Adam and including the scrolls of Abraham, the Torah given to Moses, the Psalms given to David, Injil to Jesus, and all culminating in the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad. They believe that Allah chose these human beings as His prophets and messengers to convey His guidance and to exemplify it for their people. These prophets are recognized as Adam, Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jesus, and finally Muhammad, who is the Seal of the office of Prophethood. This office of Prophethood is seen as indivisible.

The Prophet Muhammad (SAAWS) was born in Makkah, or Mecca in the area that is now Saudi Arabia. At a young age he came to be known as Al-Amin, the honest and trustworthy. It was not until he was in his forties that he was called upon by Allah. He was to share God's final message and guidance, the Qur'an, with all mankind. He was to bring about the *Ummah Muslimah*, the community of submitters to Allah. He received the first revelation while he was meditating in the cave of Hira'. It was sent by the agency of the angel *Jibrail* (Gabriel). Then Muhammad called upon the Arab idolaters in Makkah. He told them to believe in One Alone God, Allah (*Tawhid*) and not to worship any divinity except Allah. Because of the deep criticism in the Qur'an of idolatry in its various forms of Associationism (*shirk*), the Makkan oligarchy began to persecute Muhammad and his followers so much so that the Prophet was commanded to migrate along with his Makkan followers—who since then had been designated as *Muhajrun* (migrants in the Cause of Allah)—to Yathrib. This emigration in 622 C.E. marked a watershed point in the history of mankind. The Muslim religious calendar is based on this very meaningful and significant event. Yathrib then became known as Madinah, which is an abbreviation of Madinat al-Nabi, city of the Prophet. This is where Muhammad established the *Ummah Muslimah*, in this Islamic city-state, a religio-moral and sociopolitical community of Muslims.

In that decade, Islam had spread to the whole of the Arabian Peninsula and sent missions to all surrounding rulers and empires, even the Persian Sasanid and the Byzantine Roman Christian empires, which were the superpowers of the time. Muhammad's companions were known as rightly guided Caliphs and Imams, they carried out his tradition and transmitted it to the new generations and established it in history. After his death in 10 H/632 C.E., the four rightly guided Caliphs led the *Ummah* from 10–40 H/632–661 C.E., and then it was led by the dynastic rulers. This spread of Islam less than a century after Muhammad's death brought an unprecedented expansion of Muslim rule throughout all the continents that were known at the time and changed the map of the world. By 711 C.E., Islam had crossed Gibraltar in the west, Caucasus in the north, and Sudan in the south, and had reached India and China in the east. At a time when Europe and the West were still in the Dark and Middle Ages, Muslim Caliphates ruled most of the world, from Al-Andalus, Spain (711–1492 C.E.) to Asia and Africa. Had there not been this integration of Islamic civilization across Europe in those times through to the Renaissance, some believe that Western civilization would never have emerged.

In the *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000), Dr. Ghulam Haider Aasi wrote an article called *Islam: A Portrait*. He describes the beginnings of the ever present conflict between Muslims and the West: "This *pax Islamica*, however, was never immune from internal disintegration or from external repulsions and reconquests. The Christian reconquest of Spain, the Inquisition, and the Crusades set a course of historical conflict between the West and the Muslim world of which European colonialism and Western neo-imperialism have been the historical corollaries. Despite these problems Islam continued to spread, not only because of the early conquests, but because of its basis on the bonding of its believers in the universal brotherhood (*Ummah*), and the spiritual truths that can transform their lives into something meaningful and purposeful."

The Qur'an, the *Sunnah* and *Hadith*, *Ijma* and the *Ijtihad* are the essential sources for Muslims in all aspects of life. The Qur'an is believed to be the revelation sent verbatim, from Allah. Brought to Muhammad during his prophethood, 610–632 C.E., it comprises 114 *surahs* (chapters) that are designated as Makkan or Madinan according to the place of their descent upon Muhammad. The *Sunnah* is the second universal source of Islam and it comprises actions, sayings, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad. The *Hadith* is their reportage in narration, six collections are recognized as authentic by the Sunni Muslims; Al-Kulini's collection, entitled: "Al-Kafi" is recognized as the earliest and authentic by the Shi'ah. The *Ijma* is explained here by Dr. Ghulam Haider Aasi: "Sunni Muslims believe in the consensus of the Muslim scholars and the community as the third

source of Islamic law whereas the Shi'ah take the teachings and interpretations of the Imams as binding." And finally the Ijtihad, it is the name of the total effort of a religious scholar to find out the correct answer to a new problem in light of the first two material sources call *Nass* (divine text) and the intent of the Islamic law through a certain systematic procedure of *Qiyas* (analogical deduction).

There are six articles of faith that Muslims believe in, they are derived from revealed sources, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. (Q. 2:285; 4:136, 150–152) These articles of faith are known as *Arkan al Iman* and they are as follows:

1. Belief in One Alone God, Allah. The Unique, Transcendent, Infinite, Creator and Sustainer of all that exists. To only worship Him.
2. Belief in the eternal life of Hereafter (*Al-Akhirah*). There will be an end to the world, a Resurrection of the whole person after death (*al-Ba'th*) and a Day of Judgement (*Yawm al-Hisab*). Muslims believe in eternal Hell and Paradise.
3. Belief in angels as creatures of Allah, always in His service.
4. Belief in Revelations from God, commonly known as belief in the Books from God.
5. Belief in human messengers—prophets of God. These chosen people convey the message of God and exemplify it for their people.
6. Belief in the Decree and Plan of God. Good and evil alike all happen with the decree of God, and nothing can fail His Plan (*Qada wa Qadar*).

Islam has five pillars of faith, the first of which is *Shahadah*, it is the statement of faith. Becoming a Muslim means accepting God as the only god and holding that Muhammad is his prophet. *Salat* is the pillar dealing with the prayer that every adult Muslim must offer five times daily. *Sawm* is fasting during the whole month of *Ramadan*, and abstaining from food, drink, sex, and all sorts of idle and immoral acts from dawn to sunset. *Zakat* is about sharing wealth. Every Muslim who has his savings for a year is obligated to pay a fixed portion of that to the poor, or those who are under debt. This is to purify the giver's wealth from greed and stinginess and helps the hearts of the recipients. Hajj means pilgrimage. All Muslims are obligated to make the journey to Ka'bah, in Makkah, Saudi Arabia at least once in their lifetime if they are physically and financially able. This pilgrimage is usually made during the first ten days of the last month of the Muslim *Hijri* Calendar, *Dhu-al*. Pilgrimage at other times is called "*Umrah*."

The different schools of law that came about at the end of the third century, *Hijrah*, were necessary because, as Dr. Ghulam Haider Aasi tells us in *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000), "With the developing needs of the Muslim *Ummah*, the expansion of the Muslim empire, and changing situations, there arose a need to derive laws from the revealed sources and to develop a systematic method for doing so." There were a lot of legal opinions in the beginning, but finally four schools of law were recognized among the Sunni Muslims as orthodox: *Hanafi*, *Maliki*, *Shafi'i*, and *Hanbali*. Two became prominent among the Shi'ah: *Ja'fariyah* of the Twelver Shi'ahs of Iran and *Zaydiyah* (Fivers) of Yemen.

Because of discrepancies over questions of faith such as, who is a true believer and what qualifies a person to be a leader and member of a truly believing community, among others, the *Ummah* began to split, first into different political views and groups, then into the sects known as the *Khawarij*, *Shi'ah*, and *Sunnis*. The *Khawarij* (Secessionists) called for extreme piety and idealistic egalitarianism, this was the first explicit political and theological schism. Fighting against all claimants of political rule, some even rejected that there was any need for governing institutions. Later on, this pursuit of a pure society led them to fanaticism and violence. An ever-increasing internal dissension and disunity along with continuous rebellion against every government almost eliminated their role and existence. The survivors ended up in the mountains of North Africa and Yemen.

The name "Shi'ah" was given to the partisans of 'Ali (d. 661 C.E.), the son-in-law of the Prophet, the fourth rightly guided Caliph of the Sunnis and the first Imam of the Shi'ah. It is the second major schism represented early on, primarily a sociopolitical critique of the rulers. It later became a permanent sect or branch of Islam. The Shi'ah developed the doctrine of *Imamah* over and against the Sunni *Khilafah*. Dr. Ghulam Haider Aasi also comments, "According to this view, the legitimate successor of the Prophet was 'Ali, their first Imam, whose succession then continued in his descendants who are thus political and religious leaders." These Imams are seen as divinely inspired and authoritative interpreters of the Qur'an. Shi'ism has split into numerous sects stemming from the debate of the legitimacy of different Imams. One main branch is the *Ithna 'Ash'aiyyah* (Twelvers) who believe in the twelve Imams, they subscribe to the legal school *Ja'fariyyah*, have been established in Iran since 1501, which is the

Safoid period. They are also the largest branch of Shi'ah. Another branch is the *Zaydiyyah*, they consider Zayd b. Ali (d. 740) to be the fifth and final Imam, he was the second grandson of Husayn. They are closer to Sunnis and follow the Zaydi school of law. They established themselves in Yemen. The *Isma'iliyah* take Ismail's (d. 760) son Muhammad as the impending Mahdi. Splitting into many offshoots that continue to present times there are the Fatmids, Qaramitah, Nizaris, Agha Khanis, and Druz. Commonly known as the Sunnis in distinction to non-orthodox sects and groups, more than ninety percent of Muslims in the world identify themselves with the term *Ahl-al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, or People of the Tradition and the Community. There are two main theological schools and dispositions that have become permanent among them. In their classical terms, these are known as *Mu'tazilah* and *Ash'ariyah*. *Ash'ariyah* emphasizes the absolute primacy and total sufficiency of the revealed texts, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* and most of the revivalist or reform movements, pejoratively called fundamentalist or neo-fundamentalist groups in the West, derive their thought and arguments from this theology and its sister traditional theologies. *Mu'tazilah* represents rationalist philosophical theology.

Sufism is the mystical tradition and dimension that is one of the most enduring contributions of Islam to human spirituality. It is more correctly called *Tasawwuf*. The spiritual experience of Islam as a universal religion is carried on by Sufis who have been the mystics and scholars of traditional Islam to the present time. They have espoused a personal relationship with God based on love and devotion instead of submission based on fear and prohibition that characterizes the official religion. Derived from the Arabic word *suf*, Sufi means wool. The first practitioners of mysticism in the ninth century wore woolen garments similar to what Christian monks wore. Although they do draw from a few exceptional passages of the Qur'an for justification of their ritual practices, which were outside the mainstream of Islam, they have been inspired mainly by other religions, most prominently Christian mysticism, the Zoroastrians of Persia and the mystery-religions of the pre-Christian Middle East. This secretive brotherhood has always been semi-clandestine. Sufis have made unquestionable contributions to Islam, providing it with a sense of compassion and personal commitment, most likely preventing the religion from falling into arid formalism completely. The Sufis have contributed some of the most influential works of philosophy and theology. The most notable was the work of Abu-Hamid al-Ghazzali, an eleventh century scholar. He was involved in orthodox Islam and then turned to spiritualism, he arranged somewhat of a merger and mutual tolerance of the two approaches which helped the Sufis be seen as more acceptable, as well as helping to humanize the orthodox faith.

In the book *Understanding Islam* (1995) Thomas W. Lippman talks about the first brotherhoods: "The first brotherhood, the Qadiri, was founded in Baghdad in the twelfth century, well after the rise of the phenomenon of mysticism itself. Many others were established later; some initiates belonged to more than one. Some, like the Nakshabandi, are worldwide, others obscure and regional. One order, the Senussi, once ruled an entire country; Libya. The king who was overthrown in Qaddafi's coup of 1969 bore the name of the order: Idris al-Senussi. (The Sufis left traces in our own language. A member was called a fakir or a dervish – *darwish* in Arabic; the term "whirling dervish" is derived from the pirouetting of the initiates of one of the Turkish orders.)"

Another part of the Islamic faith is Wahhabism, it is named after Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. It came about in the eighteenth century partly as a reaction to the saint-worship, ritual excesses, and doctrinal heterodoxy of the Sufis. It is somewhat comparable to Puritanism in Christianity. It is the dominant religious interpretation in Saudi Arabia and their history is closely linked. They see Wahhabism as the movement that broke them away from the superstition and worship of holy men and idolatry that had infiltrated Islam in the medieval era.

Abd al-Wahhab began this campaign against the rites of the mystics and of the folk-religionists, he was against worship at tombs, prayer to holy men, minor pilgrimages, belief in Muhammad's intercession with God, and initiation rituals. He preached a more basic form of Islam: man, God, Muhammad, and the Koran, and nothing else. He returned to what he saw as the pure religion of Islam's first century. This sect endures today because of many people in history who helped keep it in tact.

There are also other sects. The Druze are reclusive people who live in the hills of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. They are monotheists, and this was religion is an offshoot of Shiism. Their roots can be traced to a *Sheikh*, or elder, named Darazi (10th century). The Druze are a close knit community that number about 200,000. The Alawites are an even more obscure sect, but they rule Syria. Their creed is an outgrowth of Shiism but far removed from it.

Historical Highlights

C.E. 570	Birth of Muhammad
609-10	Night of Power and First Revelations
622	Hijra: Departure from Meca to Medina
630	Conquest of Mecca
632	Death of Muhammad; Abu Bakr succeeds Muhammad
634	Umar succeeds Abu Bakr
636-40	Early conquests (Damascus, Jerusalem, Egypt, Persia)
644	Uthmann succeeds Umar
650	Qur'an canon established
656	Ali succeeds Uthmann
661-750	Umayyad Caliphate
1058-1111	Life of Al-Ghazali

Major Festivals

Islamic months

Muharram	September – October
Safar	October – November
Rabi I	November – December
Rabi II	December – January
Jumada I	January – February
Jumada II	February – March
Rajab	March – April
Shaban	April – May
Ramadan	May – June
Shawwal	June – July
Dhu'l-Qada	July – August
Dhu'l-Hijju	August – September

Festivals

1 Muharram	New Year's Day (Muhammad's departure from Medina, C.E. 622)
12 Rabi I	Muhammad's Birthday (Month of Rabi I)
27 Rajab	Laylat al-Miraj (Night of Ascent of Muhammad to Heaven)
27 Ramadan	Laylat al-Qadar (Night of Power—Muhammad received his first revelations)
1 Shawwal	Id al-Fitr (end of Ramadan) "The Feast of Breaking of the Fast"
8-13 Dhu'l-Hijja	Annual pilgrimage ceremonies centered on Mecca (the time when hajj should be made)
10 Dhu'l-Hijja	Id al-Adha "The Feast of the Sacrifice"

Key Terms

Apostle A messenger of God, also "prophet."

Da'wah (sometimes "da'wa") Call and invitation. Often used in connection with missionary activities.

Fatwa A Formal legal judgement.

Hadith A term used in Islam to refer to the traditions of the Prophet and his companions.

Hajj The pilgrimage to Mecca that each Muslim should try to make at least one time in their life.

Ihram Simple clothing worn during the hajj to symbolize a state of purity and the equality of all Muslims.

Imam Primarily it describes the man responsible for leading prayers in a mosque, although it has several meanings.

Islam Literally, it means "submission." Islam requires submission to the will of God.

Ka'ba Meaning a "cube." It is a cube-shaped building in the Great Mosque at Mecca.

Mahdi "the one who is rightly guided." A figure they believe will appear towards the end of time.

People of the Book References to Jews and Christians, it now also includes some other religions such as Zoroastrianism. Muslims believe that the Qur'an has corrected the errors of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament.

Sufism Islamic mysticism, based on the Qur'an, it stresses intense religious experiences.

Sunna A term used by Muslims to refer to the customs and precedent set by the Prophet Muhammad.

Tawhid The fundamental Islamic doctrine of the oneness of God.

Zalat Payment due to support the community (sometimes "zaqat," "zakat," or "zakah")

The First Peoples and Native Traditions

The World Council of Indigenous Peoples use the term "Fourth World" to describe the way of life of indigenous peoples, distinguishing them from the First (highly industrialized), Second (Socialist bloc), and Third (developing) Worlds. The difference between the first three and the Fourth World is that they believe that "the land belongs to the people" and the Fourth World believes that "the people belong to the land."

Seeing existence as a living blend of spirits, people, and nature is at the heart of the first people's beliefs. They believe that all are one, inseparable and interdependent, this is also a holistic vision that has been shared with mystics throughout the ages. Early anthropologists refer to the beliefs of many indigenous peoples as "animist" because they believe that spirits permeate matter—they animate it.

Many indigenous cultures have rich symbolic associations within their oral traditions that bring the sacred into everyday life. These things can be a pipe, a feather, a rattle, or even a color, they can help to keep them in touch with themselves and the spirit world. In a *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000), a quote from Julian Burger's book *The Gaia Atlas Of First Peoples* (1990) speaks about the history and myths of different indigenous people: "Myths that explain the origins of the world remind people of their place in the universe and of their connection with the past. Some are humorously ironic, others complex and esoteric. Some, notably Aboriginal Dreamtime, speak of the creation of the hills, rocks, hollows, and rivers formed by powerful ancestral spirits in the distant past. Others describe a dramatic split between the gods and humankind or the severance of the heavens and the Earth—as in the sudden separation of the Sky Father and Earth Mother in Maori legend." In the sacred book of the Maya of Central America, there is the story of how the Earth was peopled. These myths help to invest life with meaning.

Many indigenous groups are prey to stereotyping by the outside world, even though these peoples are strikingly diverse in their culture, religion, and social and economic organization. Some people see them as the embodiment of spiritual values, and others see them as an obstacle impeding economic progress. Really, they are people who cherish their own distinct cultures, determined to survive, despite their past of being victimized by colonialism.

Hayden Burgess is a native Hawaiian who is quoted in *The Gaia Atlas Of First Peoples* (1990) where he talks about what the Earth means to indigenous peoples, "The Earth is the foundation of Indigenous Peoples; it is the seat of spirituality, the fountain from which our cultures and languages flourish... The Earth is our historian, the keeper of events, and the bones of our forefathers. Earth provides us with food, medicine, shelter, and clothing. It is the source of our independence, it is our Mother. We do not dominate her; we must harmonize with her."

The economic life of indigenous people is based on cooperation and not competition, because survival is only possible when the community works together. The smaller scale societies usually have elaborate systems for sharing food, possessions, and ritualizing conflict. War is an aspect of cultural life. It is not about annihilating the other group. Rather, it is used as means for the individual and the group to find their identity, and is largely ceremonial. In Papua New Guinea hostilities between groups are part of the cycle of events encompassing their history of long spans of peace and enmity. Actually, the tribes of the Tsembaga and Mae Enga are known as the peoples who marry their enemies. Usually on the point of war there is a ritual means of stepping back from open confrontation, anger can be channeled into a "nothing fight," a competition of insults and yelling. It may also lead to a real fight, with blows exchanged and even serious casualties. Then when the war is over, there is a lengthy process of peacemaking, and giving of gifts. Holding ceremonies and marriages help establish links and obligation between the parties.

There is a wide belief among native peoples that there will be an imminent return of a savior figure, interestingly, it is not unlike that of the Christian belief in The Second Coming. There is a story of a teacher similar to Jesus in many tribes. This teacher taught the spiritual mysteries and an ethical way of life. He promised to return at a time when the Earth would be in great turmoil to help guide humanity into the future. He is best known by the names of Quetzalcoatl and Kukulcan. In 1993 there was a gathering at the UN called the "Cry of the Earth Conference," where leaders from seven nations released their prophecies.

The Hopi prophecy says that there will be a return of Pahana, their True White Brother. He gave an ancient Arian promise to return. They wear their hair in bangs to form a window, they say, to see their Elder Brother when He returns. It is also an identifying mark for the Elder Brother to recognize them.

The leaders of the Lakota Sioux in the 1800's were Black Elk and Crazy Horse. This was a time when the U.S. saw the decimation of many native groups. Black Elk's vision of the future was of great famine, sickness, and war for his people. They would lose heart and the sacred hoop of his nation would be broken. But he also saw that they would be reunited after seven generations, becoming part of the greater hoop of all the nations of the earth. He heard a voice giving him a message that he interpreted to mean that a great Prophet from the East would bring a message to his people.

Crazy Horse's vision was of darkness descending upon his people. He saw the coming of cars, planes and the world wars of the modern era. He saw his people starting to awaken after the last war and beginning to dance again under the Sacred Tree. He was amazed at where his vision concluded; representatives of all races were dancing with his people and they had become brothers.

The White Buffalo is one of the most sacred symbols among the Lakota, Crow, Chippewa, and other Native American tribes. Representing purity, sacrifice and a sign that prophecy is being fulfilled. White Buffalo Calf Woman is honored as the messiah by the Lakota Sioux, she brought the Sacred Pipe and established the foundation of their ritual and social life. She promised to return and transformed into a white buffalo as she left. In 1994 a white buffalo was born in Wisconsin and another in 1996 in South Dakota. Native peoples have taken these births as a sign to start "mending the hoop" of the nations, establishing brotherhood within the family of man, and returning to a spiritual way of life.

In 1969 the elders of Dhyani Ywahoo's Tsalagi/Cherokee group released their teachings that were kept secret since the conquest. The elder woman, Dhyani Ywahoo, is disseminating that knowledge through books, lectures, and workshops. In the *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000) Bette Stockbauer comments on her: "She claims that her own Ywahoo lineage was founded by a legendary prophet called the Pale One who rekindled the sacred fires throughout the Americas. She says: 'The Pale One is a cyclically incarnating being. He comes when the people have forgotten their sacred ways, bringing reminders of the Law, recalling all to right relationship. He is expected soon again, and he may be alive even now. It is good.'"

The Aboriginals of Australia believe that each tribe has a responsibility to take care of one part of the environment. Believing that underground minerals are a vital part of the earth's energy grid, they are very concerned about the excessive mining in modern Arian, particularly of uranium. The elders met in Canberra in 1975 to give a warning of cataclysms to come. They drew together over 350 Aboriginal people and told them to go out and teach their knowledge to the world, preparing everyone for a time in the future when we will go back to our beginnings—when all cultures will exist as one.

In New Zealand, the Waitaha nation claims the most ancient lineage. Broken up by warriors from the Pacific, the elders hid one thousand years of their generational history and wisdom teachings. They passed the knowledge down through only a small number of people in each generation. In 1990 the elders were said to have seen a configuration in the heavens that they took as a sign for them to release their sacred knowledge.

In South America there is the pre-Columbian tribe of the Kogi, they live an isolated existence in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in Colombia. They are some of the few who still live their lives as they did in ancient times, this is because they escaped destruction by the Europeans. They have warned that the Earth is dying, and therefore, we will die if we don't change things.

The prophecies of the Quechua Incans predicted the coming of the white man and how they would bring five hundred years of materialism and imbalance. They now say that that era is coming to an end and the Age of Aquarius will "signal the return of Light to the planet and the dawn of a golden era. We live in a time of the fulfillment of prophecy," according to Willaru Huarta in the *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000). Another Peruvian group that is releasing prophecy is the Q'ero. They are traveling to the industrialized nations to hold ceremonies and bring to them their vision of a positive future.

There has been an ancient confederation of Native American elders that have been meeting for thousands of years and still do so today. They are made up of representatives from Nicaragua to the Arctic Circle. This confederation decided to hide the Mayan teachings before the Spaniards came. They were entrusted to certain families to care for. Hunbatz Men claims to be an inheritor of that lineage and has written *Secrets of Mayan Science/Religion*, in which he reveals teachings of astrology, meditation, and the septenary root of creation,

that are very much like that of Buddhism and Hinduism. He talks of Kukulcan and Quetzalcoatl as an example of how we can attain the same exalted stage by acting as they did in ancient times.

In all these statements from different peoples, there is the common thread of reconciliation and accepting people from all backgrounds. (The practices of Native Americans are covered more extensively in the UMS course *Native American Studies*.)

Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrians have undergone the severest persecutions for centuries at the hands of its conquerors in Iran, after the fall of the last Sassanian Zoroastrian Empire. Zoroastrians are the smallest minority of all religions. It is the first revealed monotheistic religion in the world. The knowledge of when it was founded has been lost in antiquity. It is believed to be founded somewhere between 2000 to 1800 B.C. Founded by Zarathushtra or, as the Greeks called him, Zoroaster, he was said to have flourished on the East Iranian plateau. He saw the God (*Ahura Mazda*—the Wise Lord), felt conscious of His presence, and heard His words. He recorded this in five Songs or Poems that he composed called the *Gathas*.

They believe in One Supreme God they call Ahura Mazda. He is to be understood through his six divine attributes: *Vohu Mana* (Good Mind), *Asha* (Truth, Righteousness), *Spenta Armaity* (Correct Thinking, Piety), *Xsthra Vairya* (Divine Domain), *Haurvatat* (Perfection, Integrity), and *Amertat* (Immortality). Zoroastrians believe that the *Yazatas*, which are angels, work constantly to help humans to bring the world to perfection. Zoroastrianism is one of the first true ecological religions in the world. They keep all the natural elements like air, water, and lands totally pure. They prevent pollution at all costs.

Zoroastrians believe that after death the immortal soul of each person is judged according to all the good deeds they did in the world, and the soul either enjoys the pleasures of paradise or is sent to hell. God's attributes are inherent in all humans and they must work with God to defeat evil and bring the world to perfection through good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. Two beliefs that came later are of the appearance of the last savior, called *Sosayant*, and of the final Day of Judgment with the resurrections of all who have died.

Following the *Gathas of the Prophet*, seven chapters were written by his disciples called *Hapatan Haiti*. They are also known as *Old Avesta*, as their language differs from the later scriptures, called the *Younger Avesta*. Together they are known as the *Avestan*, with the younger consisting of the *Yasna* (without the *Gathas*, containing seventy-two chapters), *Vispered*, *Vendidad*, and the *Yasts*. The original *Avestan* scriptures were written in twenty-one books called the *Nasks*, of which only one complete book, *Nask-Vendidad*, has survived the ravages of time. These survived because of the *Yasna* liturgical ceremony that has been passed from generation to generation by oral tradition.

Every Zoroastrian will undergo the ritual *Navzote* or *Sudraposhi Ceremony*. It is for new initiates (ages seven to fifteen) entering the religion. Some are like the *Yasna* ceremony, to be performed in the Zoroastrian Fire-Temples, and some are to be performed anywhere outside the Zoroastrian Temples, like *Jahan* (thanksgiving) ceremony. The Fire-Temples have their name, not because they worship fire, but because the fire is kept as a symbol of purity, as a focal point for prayers.

Around 650 C.E. this community was over a million strong. Between the ninth and tenth centuries C.E. a small band of the community migrated to India to avoid persecution and harassment. They are the Parsees, and now number fewer than 60,000 in India and 2,500 in Pakistan. Very few have survived in Iran, about 10,000. Some are in the West, like North America where they number about 12,000, and in Europe around 7,000. There are possibly 3,000 more scattered around the rest of the world. There are no fixed denominations and the Iranian Zoroastrians and the Parsee have different cultures and mother tongues as a result of their long separation.

Fundamental cornerstones of this tradition include respect for creation of nature and of equality for all human beings. Focusing on this, Zoroastrian make an effort to learn and understand all they can about other faiths, while still maintaining the integrity and identity of their faith quite successfully. Right now is a renaissance of spiritual awareness among the Zoroastrian community. They are trying to disseminate the message of the prophet to the youth and adults helping them be aware of the injustices that are being perpetrated in the name of religion.

Zoroastrianism shares some of the same theological concepts as Judaism and Christianity. They are: Heaven and Hell, there is one supreme and loving God, there will be a final judgment and a resurrection, and an ultimate triumph of good over evil, to name a few. They also all have strict moral and ethical codes, and believe

that the Messiah will come for the final restoration. Zoroastrianism has played a vital role in the development of Western religious thought in general. For example, the words *satan* and *paradise* are of Zoroastrian origin. In *Sourcebook Of The World's Religions* (2000), Rohinton M. Rivetna elaborates further on this point: "The interchange of Zoroastrian thought with Judeo-Christian ideology first took place when Cyrus the Great defeated the Assyrians and released the Jews from Babylonian captivity. They heralded Cyrus as their messiah, as prophesied two centuries earlier in Isaiah 45:1-3. The Old Testament is replete with references to the Persian emperors Darius, Cyrus, and Xerxes, all of whom were Zoroastrians."

Their rituals and prayers revolve around a sacred flame which is kept burning with sandalwood and frankincense in the inner sanctum of every Zoroastrian temple, and often in their homes. It symbolizes the inner light that burns within each person, and a physical representation of the Illumined Mind, Light, and Truth, which are all highly regarded in the Zoroastrian doctrine. They are very much against idolatry in any shape or form.

They believe that the presence of Ahura Mazda can be found in every human and is called the Fravashi or Farohar. It is seen as the Divinity in Humanity and their conscience. It is immortal and lives on after the human body dies, it is there to guide and protect the person. Zoroastrians seek guidance from their Fravashi when struggling with the choice between good and evil.

The Zoroastrian Calendar

Farvardin	March – April
Ardibehisht	April – May
Khordad	May – June
Tir	June – July
Amرداد	July – August
Shahrevar	August – September
Mihr	September – October
Aban	October – November
Adar	November – December
Dai	December – January
Bahman	January – February
Spendarmad	February – March

This concludes our overview of some of the world's religions. There are more than these, but these are the ones that you might have heard of and are being practiced today in the world. Notice that there are many similarities in these religions, including the three common aspects of all religions:

1. belief in a higher power or force
2. the desire to be a good person and treat others with kindness and love
3. various rituals for focusing intent on the divine

All these religions are useful to their practitioners, and focus attention on spirituality. Even metaphysics embraces these concepts, and this is why it is considered a new religion. Religions have been needed to organize spirituality into various formats that help the human psyche explain its beginnings, its surroundings and its future. Let us respect all religions, of all nations, and all people.

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World Religions Exam Questions

Name _____ Phone # _____

Address _____

(Please supply name, phone #, and address as identifying factors for giving credit properly)

1. What two elements are commonly involved in most African tribes rites and practices?
A. Fire and water B. Masculine and feminine C. Drumming and dancing
2. In Buddhism, who was the only "ordinary" man to have dictated sutras?
3. How does a person who is meditating bring about the desired state of mental calm?
4. Why does Buddha urge us to curb our anger?
5. What year did the Zen Buddhist Society form?
A. 1831 B. 1951 C. 1931
6. What is a Bodhisattva?
7. What country did the Baha'i Faith begin in?
A. Iraq B. Poland C. Iran
8. What religion did 'Ali-Muhammad, Titled the Bab start besides Baha'ism?
9. In the Baha'i faith, what were Shoghi Effendi Rabbani's life's works?
10. What is the monthly program that the Baha'i community celebrates called?
A. The Sepiroth B. Feast C. Death And Rebirth
11. According to the Bible, Mary, Jesus' mother, conceived him in her womb through the Immaculate Conception.

T F

12. Who was most threatened by Jesus' teachings and played a large part in having him crucified?
A. Mary Magdalene B. John The Baptist C. The Pharisees

13. Name three denominations in the Christian faith.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

14. Confucius' was a statesman and social planner in addition to philosopher. **T** **F**

15. In Confucianism, what is the *Doctrine of the Mean's* guiding principle?

16. What is the first principle that the Confucian system is based on?

17. What is the reason that the efforts to establish Confucianism as a state religion has failed?

18. In Jainism, Lord Rishabhanath is *Tirthankara* of the present declining era. **T** **F**

19. Name 3 of the 7 languages that the classical Jain literature can be found in?

20. In Jainism, non-violence by all faculties is the golden rule called *Ahimsa*. **T** **F**

21. What are the three types of Shinto?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

22. What are the names of the divine couple from Japanese mythology (Shintoism)?

35. How can spiritual insights in Wicca and other indigenous Earth religions be achieved?

36. Why has Wicca grown in popularity among women?

37. Nature Spirituality honors the interconnected spirituality of life throughout the Universe/Cosmos, as well as the planet Earth.

T F

38. What three men are the roots of the Jewish tree of life?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

39. What was the event that gave the Jews their reason and power for survival as a people?

- A. When the Pentateuchal teachings were revealed to Moses and the Israelites after the Exodus
- B. When they received the Torah on Mount Sinai
- C. When Abraham was called to the Promised Land with his people

40. Why do the Jews believe that Israel represents the chosen people of God?

41. In What is the basic symbol of Judaism, that is also a symbol for Redemption?

- A. A seven-branched candelabrum
- B. A sacred animal
- C. A sacred artifact

42. What is the Yiddish word for a Jewish synagogue, or temple?

- A. Aknar
- B. Yurt
- C. Shul

43. In the Jewish faith, why is any kind of work prohibited on the Sabbath?

- A. To promote health
- B. To attain a greater spiritual state
- C. To take a vacation once a week

44. Islam is embodied in the Qur'an and in the _____, which are the actions, sayings, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad.

45. Allah chose certain humans to be His prophets and messengers to convey His guidance and exemplify it for their people. Adam, Abraham, Noad, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad are the only six prophets recognized as true messengers in Islam. T F

46. Name the six pillars of light, or main beliefs, in Islam, also known as the *Arkan al Iman*.

1. Belief in _____
2. Belief in _____
3. Belief in _____
4. Belief in _____
5. Belief in _____
6. Belief in _____

47. What is the term used by the World Council Of Indigenous Peoples to describe the way of life of indigenous peoples, distinguishing them from the First, Second and Third Worlds?

- A. Netherworld B. Otherworld C. Fourth World

48. What does the White Buffalo represent in American Indian traditions?

49. In the Zoroastrian faith, what are the six divine attributes of the One Supreme God named Ahura Mazda?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

50. What do Zoroastrians call the presence of Ahura Mazda that is found in every human, which is immortal and lives on after the human body dies?